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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Pahalgam attack was act of economic warfare, says EAM in NYC

NEW YORK, 1 JULY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 civilians, as an act of economic warfare to cripple Kashmir's tourism and provoke religious violence. Speaking at a Newsweek event in New York, Jaishankar asserted that India would not be deterred by "nuclear blackmail" from responding to terror threats emanating from Pakistan.

He added that terrorist groups such as The Resistance Front (TRF), a front for Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, operate openly from well-known "corporate headquarters" in Pakistan.

"We will not allow terrorists to act with impunity. We'll hold responsible the governments that support and fund them," he added. He stressed that terrorism is a global threat and must not be used as a tool of statecraft. On claims by former US President Donald Trump about using trade to defuse tensions, Jaishankar said trade negotiations did not figure in the ceasefire talks.

India-US to seal 'interim' trade deal soon

India-US trade negotiations entered their sixth day in Washington on Tuesday, with both sides aiming to finalise an interim agreement ahead of the 9 July deadline, when suspended US tariffs on Indian goods may return. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the deal is "very close," while White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed that an announcement from President Trump's trade team is imminent. India is pushing for greater market access for labour-intensive exports like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, and engineering goods. In return, the US is demanding tariff concessions on farm produce, dairy, electric vehicles, wines, and industrial products.

The US had imposed 26 per cent tariffs on Indian goods on 2 April, which were suspended for 90 days. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh spoke to US' Pete Hegseth about long-term cooperation in defence sector, including military exchanges, to expanding industry collaborations.—*PTI*

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Without subsidies Musk will go back to S Africa: Trump

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

Former allies turned rivals, US President Donald Trump and tech billionaire Elon Musk clashed over Trump's flagship spending plan, the One Big Beautiful Bill. Trump threatened to cut government subsidies to Musk's companies, saying without them, Musk might have to "head back home to South Africa." Tesla shares fell nearly 6% amid the fallout, adding to a 20% slump this year. Musk criticised the bill as "political suicide" and vowed to unseat lawmakers who back it. He also threatened to form a new "America Party" if it passes. Trump hit back, targeting EV mandates and suggesting massive cuts to rocket launches and electric vehicle programmes tied to Musk. He also hinted DOGE—the Department of Government Efficiency—may investigate him. —*PTI*

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K'taka HC orders CBI probe into Valmiki Corp scam

Court asks State SIT to hand over all probe records to CBI

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Karnataka High Court on Tuesday ordered a comprehensive probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the alleged Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation scam.

Previously, the CBI's role in the case was confined to examining limited irregularities.

However, the High Court has now directed a full-fledged investigation, requiring the state's Special Investigation Team (SIT) to transfer all case-related documents and evidence to the central agency.

The case involves serious allegations of embezzlement of funds earmarked for the welfare of tribal communities.

In June, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) carried out

multiple raids under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) at locations associated with Congress MP E Tukaram from Ballari and three Karnataka MLAs.

The searches were part of a larger probe into the suspected diversion of funds by the Valmiki Corporation.

Investigators believe that substantial amounts were illicitly withdrawn from the Corporation's accounts and funnelled into bogus bank accounts, before being laundered through shell companies.

The ED has also alleged that a portion of the transferred funds was used in the Ballari constituency during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The alleged scam emerged after corporation accounts superintendent Chandrasekharan P was found dead on 21 May, 2024. His suicide note alleged an unauthorised transfer of Rs 187 crore from the corporation, with Rs 88.62 crore illegally deposited into IT company accounts and a Hyderabad cooperative bank. Following the incident, two officials were suspended and Karnataka Tribal Welfare and Sports Minister Nagendra resigned, who was later arrested by the ED.

Founded in 2006, the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation was established to implement developmental schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribe communities in the state.

The development marks a setback for the Congress-led government in Karnataka, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, as it brings further scrutiny to alleged financial misconduct under its administration. —*PTI*

MLA HUSSAIN GETS NOTICE

Congess backs Siddaramaiah, no CM change in State

After Congress' win in 2023, there was reportedly a tiff between Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar for the CM post ***PHOTO: ANI***

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Congress High Command on Tuesday put to rest speculation about a leadership change in Karnataka, with senior leader Randeep Singh Surjewala stating there is no such plan. The party has also issued notice to its MLA Iqbal Hussain for speaking over the leadership issue.

Speaking to the media in Bengaluru alongside Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, Surjewala confirmed that no discussions on replacing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had occurred during his meetings with MLAs.

Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka Congress President, echoed the sentiment, stating, "Our focus is on strengthening Siddaramaiah's hands." He urged party leaders and MLAs not to speak to the media on the subject.

The statement comes amid renewed speculation, fuelled by remarks from MLAs HA Iqbal Hussain and HC Balakrishna, suggesting Shivakumar could become CM later this year. "We want discipline in the party. Discipline is important. No issue of leadership change. There is no discussion or anything on this. No one is in a hurry, 2028 is important for us," Shivakumar told reporters here. Earlier, Hussain, claimed that over 100 MLAs are expecting a change in leadership. —*PTI*

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> **Some of you asked me are you taking opinion on leadership change. The answer I had given yesterday also and I am answering again today — the answer is clearly 'no' in one word**
>
> —Randeep Singh Surjewala, Cong Karnataka in-charge

Stampede: CAT reinstates cop, govt red-faced

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has quashed the Karnataka government's suspension of senior IPS officer Vikash Kumar Vikash, who was suspended following the tragic 4 June stampede near M Chinnaswamy Stadium that claimed 11 lives.

Vikash challenged the 5 June suspension, which also named then Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda and DCP Shekar H Tekkannavar. The CAT, comprising Justice B K Shrivastava and Santhosh Mehra, ruled that the suspension was issued mechanically, without sufficient material or convincing grounds. The tribunal directed immediate reinstatement with full pay and allowances, and said the order's findings could extend to Dayananda and Tekkannavar.

The order reminded the state of its duty to apply such rulings to similarly affected officers without requiring further litigation.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah acknowledged the state may appeal. Home Minister G Parameshwara said he would review the verdict and consult the CM, as DPAR falls under his purview.

The tribunal further supported the police's actions, stating, "Police officers are human beings too. They are neither 'God' nor magicians, and they do not possess magical powers like the 'Aladdin ka Chirag' that can grant any wish with a mere snap of a finger."

The government had suspended three IPS officers under the All-India Services Rules and two others under Karnataka State Police Rules, citing failure to reject RCB's 4 June victory parade due to insufficient preparation time. Despite anticipating large crowds, no structured safety or crowd control measures were taken. —*PTI*

KARNATAKA GOVT ISSUES SOP FOR CROWD MANAGEMENT

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

In the wake of the 4 June stampede outside M Chinnaswamy Stadium that claimed 11 lives, the Karnataka government has issued a detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for crowd management at public events and mass gatherings.

Dated 26 June and released to the media on Tuesday, the SoP is intended as a guideline for police and event organisers. It mandates pre-event risk assessments, venue safety audits, crowd simulations, and coordination with allied departments.

Key provisions include preparing crowd management plans with defined roles, entry/exit controls, emer-gency evacuation routes, medical aid, and deployment of trained personnel. Events at venues failing safety audits will not be approved.

Officers must liaise with organisers to assess the event's nature, expected footfall, risks, and permit sta-tus. Digital ticketing, QR scanning, and biometric verification are recommended. Clear demarcation of entry lanes for VIPs, public, and staff, along with accessible paths for the differently-abled, are required.

The SoP calls for real-time crowd updates, use of public address systems, and simulation drills. Use of force must be minimal and recorded. Logs of key decisions and crowd behaviour must be maintained to ensure accountability and preparedness for future events. —*PTI*

Cabinet starts ₹1L cr scheme to boost pvt R&D

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme with a Rs 1 lakh crore corpus to stimulate private sector investment in research and innovation. Chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the scheme aims to provide long-term, low or zero-interest financing to support private investment in sunrise sectors and areas of strategic and economic significance. It targets innovation-driven growth and self-reliance. The scheme will also support high-technology projects, acquisition of critical technologies, and establishment of a deep-tech fund of funds. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) will oversee the scheme, with its governing board chaired by the Prime Minister. The Executive Council of ANRF will approve guidelines and select second-level fund managers .—*PTI*

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UK-BASED KIN OF CRASH VICTIMS MAY SUE AIR INDIA, BOEING

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The UK-based families are preparing to file lawsuits against Boeing and Air India over the Ahmedabad crash, sources have revealed. The disaster, which occurred on 12 June, claimed the lives of 241 of the 242 individuals on board the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner shortly after take-off.

Sources said the families of the victims were consulting with UK-based law firm Keystone Law to file potential lawsuits.

Crash report next week

The investigation into the crash is ongoing, with preliminary findings expected by 11 July. Indian Civil Aviation Minister Murlidhar Mohol stated that all possibilities, including sabotage, are under scrutiny, particularly as both engines of the aircraft failed shortly after take-off. —*Agencies*

T'gana blast toll rises to 36; CM gives ₹1 cr aid

Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy consoles families of victims after Sigachi Industries' pharma plant explosion in Sangareddy district ***PHOTO: PTI***

HYDERABAD, 1 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Tuesday announced that the government, along with Sigachi Industries Ltd, will ensure Rs 1 crore compensation is provided to the families of those who died in the explosion at the pharma plant in Pashamylaram, Sangareddy district.

Reddy, who visited the blast site, said the toll from the explosion rose to 36.

He also declared Rs 10 lakh compensation for the seriously injured and Rs 5 lakh for those with minor injuries who can return to work after recovery. Additionally, the state government will give Rs 1 lakh to the deceased families and Rs 50,000 to the injured for immediate expenses.

Reddy confirmed that all medical expenses will be covered by the state and the company. death toll

At the time of the blast, 143 workers were present. Only 56 have been accounted for so far, with search operations underway for the rest. Most victims hail from Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana.

Among those waiting in anguish is Pooja Kumari, a seven-month pregnant woman from Bihar, desperately searching for her husband, two uncles, and brother.

Her husband, Naga Paswan, and relatives were working at the plant when the explosion occurred.

"We searched all hospitals but found nothing," she said, pleading for help.

Locals criticised the company for not doing enough to trace missing workers. —*PTI*

STs GET 7.5% QUOTA

In a 1st, apex court introduces quota for SC & ST staff

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

In a first, the Supreme Court has introduced a formal reservation policy for the direct appointment and promotion of its staffers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The decision was communicated in a circular issued on 24 June to all Supreme Court employees.

"As per the directions of the Competent Authority, it is to notify for the information of all concerned that the Model Reservation Roster and Register has been uploaded on the Supnet (internal email network) and it is made effective from June 23, 2025.

.As per the circular and the model roster now in effect, top court employees will receive a 15 per cent quota and ST employees a 7.5 per cent quota in promotions.

- According to the policy, the quota benefits will be available to registrars, senior personal assistants, assistant librarians, junior court assistants and chamber attendants.

According to the policy, the quota benefits will be available to registrars, senior personal assistants, assistant librarians, junior court assistants and chamber attendants.

The rollout of this policy comes under the tenure of Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, who is notably the second Chief Justice from the Scheduled Caste community. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

KKRTC earned Rs 5L from ticketless travellers since Apr

KALABURAGI, 1 JULY

Kalaburagi Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) has collected Rs 5,29,403 as fine from passengers caught travelling without tickets, officials said on Tuesday. The corporation collected the fines during an intensified inspection drive in April and May this year, the officials said. The inspections were conducted on 36,704 buses plying within the corporation's jurisdiction, and a total of 2,315 passengers were caught travelling without tickets. This would have cost the corporation Rs 1,39,363 in revenue. The corporation's Chief Traffic Manager V Ravindra Reddy said that passengers boarding the bus must either buy a ticket or carry a pass to avoid legal action. *—Salar News*

Prima facie, RCB responsible for stampede: CAT

Tribunal says that RCB left the cops with no time to prepare for large gathering

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) on Tuesday observed that the Royal Challengers Bengaluru are "prima facie responsible" for the stampede outside Chinnaswamy Stadium on 4 June, which led to the death of 11 people.

Nearly 2.5 lakh fans thronged the MG Road and Cubbon Road areas near the stadium after RCB announced a victory parade from the Vidhana Soudha and a fan engagement programme at the stadium to celebrate the team's maiden IPL triumph.

"…Therefore, prima facie it appears that the RCB is responsible for the gathering of about three to five lakh people. The RCB did not take the appropriate permission or consent from the Police," the CAT noted.

"Suddenly, they posted on social media platforms and as a result of aforesaid information the public were gathered," added the CAT in its observation.

The RCB had posted in its social media handles about the parade and the fan engagement on the morning of 4 June, and the Tribunal noted that the police department did not have sufficient time in its hands to manage such a large gathering.

"Because of shortage of time, the police was unable to do the appropriate arrangements. Sufficient time was not given to the police. Suddenly, the RCB created the aforesaid type of nuisance without any prior permission.

"Police personnel are also human beings. They are neither God (Bhagwan) nor magician and also not having the magic powers like "Alladdin ka Chirag" which was able to fulfill any wish only by rubbing a finger," the CAT remarked.

At the time of publishing, the RCB management did not comment. Earlier, charges were pressed against RCB and the Karnataka State Cricket Association, leading to the resignation of KSCA Secretary A Shankar and Treasurer Jayaram. *—PTI*

Nearly 2.5 lakh fans thronged the MG Road and Cubbon Road areas near the stadium after RCB announced a victory parade from the Vidhana Soudha **PHOTO: PTI**

BESCOM cuts off power to Chinnaswamy

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Bengaluru Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) disconnected electricity supply to M Chinnaswamy Stadium, managed by the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), due to non-compliance with fire safety regulations.

The action was taken after the Director General of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services wrote to the BESCOM Managing Director, directing the disconnection of the stadium's electricity for failing to implement recommended fire safety measures.

Earlier, the Karnataka High Court had criticised BESCOM for continuing to provide electricity to the stadium despite clear violations of fire safety protocols. The matter came up during the hearing of a petition filed by KSCA challenging the disconnection notice issued by BESCOM.

A single-judge bench of Justice S Sunil Dutt Yadav heard the petition filed by the KSCA challenging the notice.

The bench then said that the government should issue a fire safety clearance letter. "Who will be responsible if another mishap occurs? If fire safety measures are not taken, let the stadium remain in darkness."

The bench issued notices to the BESCOM officials and adjourned the hearing to 15 July. *—ANI*

Didn't talk leadership change: Surjewala

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

AICC General Secretary and party's State in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala on Tuesday ruled out any opinion on leadership change, remarks that come in the wake of internal bickering in the Congress.

"Some of you asked me are you taking opinion on leadership change. The answer I had given yesterday also and I am answering again today-- the answer is clearly 'no' in one word," Surjewala said in a press conference.

He firmly stated that MLAs shouldn't be rumourmongering.

"What we deliberate in the party should remain within the party. I have advised my MLAs also. If they have a problem, instead of raising an issue or a non-issue to settle score, raise it with the head of the family -- In the KPCC, there is Shivakumar and in the government there is Siddaramaiah," he said.

Flanked by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress President, Surjewala said he had a meeting with the party MLAs, MPs, MLCs and party candidates who contested the assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

Congress Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala with KPCC President and DYCM DK Shivakumar during a press meet at the party office in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

"We are trying to understand from our MLAs what work they have done in the past two years in their respective constituencies," Surjewala said. "It's important to review their performance.... I am asking my MLAs to give their report cards.

"We are also asking them (MLAs) what, if any, difficulty or aspiration he or she has. Every MLA has some aspirations or some more work to be done in the constituency," he explained.

He said that he would meet all MLAs in in the next week. After the MLAs, he said he would meet the ministers to understand what they have done in their respective constituencies. *—PTI*

Luck made Siddaramaiah CM: BR Patil

Bengaluru, 1 July

Hours after the press conference, a leaked video of senior Congress leader BR Patil triggered a fresh fire. In the video, Aland Congress MLA can be heard talking over the phone saying, "(Chief Minister) Siddaramaiah hit a lottery. His fortunes were good and he became the CM. I have no Godfather or God. I met Surjewala and said everything I had to. They heard me out with patience, let's see what happens." In response, the CM said, "Yes, I am lucky. That's why I became the Chief Minister." *—Agencies*

CENSORSHIP OR FREE SPEECH?

HC hears X Corp's plea on content takedown notices

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday heard a case filed by X Corp India, the Indian arm of Elon Musk-owned social media platform X (formerly Twitter), challenging the authority of government officials to issue content takedown notices under the Information Technology Act.

X Corp informed the court that it had recently received a notice from the Ministry of Railways seeking the removal of a video showing a woman driving a car on railway tracks in Hyderabad.

"What if every Tom, Dick and Harry officer sends me notices? See how this is being misused," Senior Advocate KG Raghavan argued for X Corps.

This remark was frowned upon by Justice M Nagaprasanna and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Union of India, who said officials filed the complaint.

- X Corp informed the court that it received a notice from the Ministry of Railways seeking the removal of a video showing a woman driving a car on railway tracks in Hyderabad

X Corp has sought a judicial declaration that Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act does not empower government officials to issue blocking orders, arguing that such orders must follow the procedure laid out in Section 69A of the Act, along with the relevant blocking rules.

Senior Advocate Aditya Sondhi, representing an association of digital media houses that filed an intervention application, said content creators are directly affected when platforms are ordered to take down content.

The bench scheduled the matter for final hearing on 8 July and permitted X Corp to amend its petition to include various Union ministries. *—PTI*

FUGITIVE MURDER SUSPECT NABBED AFTER THREE YEARS IN MANGALURU

MANGALURU, 1 JULY

A murder suspect who had been evading authorities for nearly three years was arrested near Mangaluru in the State on 30 June, police confirmed on Tuesday. Mohammad Mustafa, also known as Musta, was apprehended after his bail was revoked by the Supreme Court in April 2022.

In 2020, Mustafa had been granted bail by the State High Court in connection with the murder of Abdul Latif, who was killed on 5 June, 2020, in a violent incident involving ten assailants near Mulki Vijay Sannidhi Highway. However, following the Supreme Court's cancellation of his bail, Mustafa allegedly fled abroad using a fake passport.

Police said that he escaped to Oman with forged documents and made his way back to India illegally via Nepal in April 2024. A dedicated police team tracked him to his home village of Pakshikere in Mulki taluk.

He was presented before a magistrate and remanded in judicial custody. He faces multiple criminal charges, including illegal immigration, use of forged documents, absconding from trial, and nine additional cases across several districts. *—PTI*

HKP re-appointed to handle State's border and river disputes

BELAGAVI, 1 JULY

In response to the call from Kannada organisations in north Karnataka, the State government has reappointed Law Minister HK Patil as the in-charge minister to oversee border and river disputes. This decision comes after Maharashtra reorganised its high-power committee to supervise its ongoing territorial claims against Karnataka.

Kannada organisations in Belagavi had urged the government to appoint a dedicated minister for this pressing issue, nominating HK Patil due to his extensive knowledge and experience. Patil previously served as the in-charge minister for border districts from 2013 to 2018, a position that has remained vacant since.

Maharashtra's newly reconstituted 18-member high-power committee, led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, includes prominent political figures, such as NCP supremo Sharad Pawar. Maharashtra claims rights over 864 villages and towns, including Belagavi, Karwar, and Bidar. The state filed a suit in the Supreme Court in 2004, naming the union government and the State as respondents. This matter, however, has yet to be addressed, with arguments suggesting that such disputes fall under the jurisdiction of the union government, not the courts.

The Supreme Court is expected to take up the case after its annual vacation concludes on 13 July. *—Salar News*

Locals catch leopard after it attacks man in C'ballapur

GUDIBANDE, 1 JULY

After a farmer was attacked by leopard while grazing his cattle in Kerehalli in Gudibande taluk of Chikkaballapur, local villagers bravely helped forest officials catch the big cat. The farmer sustained bite injuries and has been hospitalised at Gudibande.

The incident occurred around noon when the farmer, Ramakrishnappa, went near the village pond to graze his cattle. As he was collecting water, a leopard attacked him. Although he managed to escape, he sustained injuries on his face and left shoulder.

Villagers, armed with sticks and a net then caught the animal with the help of forest authorities. Kanakaraj, DRFO Gudibande, said they caught a two-year-old male leopard. They believed that a female leopard and a cub managed to escape. *—Salar News*

LINKED TO COVID VACCINE?

State to investigate surge in heart attacks

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday cautioned people against heart problem symptoms as an experts committee headed by the Director of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research has been formed to identify the exact cause behind the surge of deaths in Hassan.

He urged everyone to visit the nearest health centre immediately for a check-up if they have symptoms such as chest pain or difficulty breathing, and not to ignore these signs.

Siddaramaiah said that more than twenty people have died due to heart attacks in the past month alone in Hassan district.

"The government is taking this matter very seriously," he said on X.

Orders were given to the same committee back in February to conduct a thorough study on the reasons behind sudden deaths among young people in the state, and whether the Covid vaccines could have had any adverse effects, he said. In this regard, the process of examining and analysing heart patients is also underway.

Siddaramaiah condemned the actions of BJP leaders, alleging that they are using such matters for their political gains.

"It cannot be denied that the hasty approval and distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine to the public could also be a reason for these deaths, as several studies worldwide have recently indicated that Covid vaccines could be a cause for the increasing number of heart attacks. Before the BJP criticise us on this matter, they should ask their conscience," he added.

On Monday, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao ordered an expert study into the matter.

"I have already instructed the department officials to conduct a study by experts under the leadership of the Director of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research to investigate the increase in heart attacks and submit a report," he said on X.

The State government has implemented the Puneeth Rajkumar Hrudaya Jyothi Yojane to prevent sudden heart attacks. But, there is a need for comprehensive research on the recent increase in heart attacks among young people, Rao said. *—PTI*

Fire at Victoria Hospital: 26 patients moved to safety

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

A minor fire broke out in the seminar room of the burns ward of the state-run Victoria Hospital early morning on Tuesday, following which 26 patients were shifted to another ward, hospital officials said. No casualties or injuries were reported in the incident, they said.

The fire that broke out at 3 am is suspected to have occurred due to a short circuit in a switch board inside the seminar room adjacent to the ward on the first floor of the building, Ramesh Krishna K, Dean and Director of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute said in a statement.

A resident doctor on duty noticed the fire and immediately alerted the authorities. The fire department came and extinguished the blaze, Krishna said.

At the time of the incident, there were 26 patients, including 14 men, five women and

seven children in the burns ward. Among them, five patients were in ICU, he said.

"In view of the smoke and as a precautionary measure, we have shifted all the 26 burns patients from this ward to H Block of Victoria Hospital. All the patients, attenders, doctors and hospital staff are safe and the situation is under control, he said.

— Salar News with Agencies

Tiger report must be submitted in 10 days: Khandre

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

State Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has directed senior officials to submit a detailed report within 10 days on tiger deaths recorded in the state over the past five-and-a-half years.

The move comes after media reports claimed that 82 tigers had died during this period. Shocked by the figures, the Minister has asked the Additional Chief Secretary and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) to categorise each death as natural or unnatural, and to specify the causes. He also sought clarification on whether investigations were conducted in cases of unnatural deaths.

Officials must report if any tigers were mutilated for body parts such as claws or canines, and whether any staff faced disciplinary action for negligence. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Navy contains fire on vessel with 14 Indian crew

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Indian Navy contained a fire on board a Palau-flagged tanker in the North Arabian Sea and ensured safety of 14 of the vessel's Indian crew members. The Navy swung into action and launched the fire-fighting operation after receiving a distress call from the vessel on Sunday. The vessel reported a major fire in its engine room while operating approximately 80 nautical miles east of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "The Indian Navy undertook a high-risk fire fighting and rescue operation on-board Palau-flagged tanker MT Yi Cheng 6 on June 29 in the North Arabian Sea, successfully stabilising the situation and ensuring the safety of 14 Indian crew members," the Navy said in a release. *—PTI*

Yogi promises Class 7 girl a steady education

GORAKHPUR, 1 JULY

When a class 7 student told Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that her education could be disrupted as her parents were unable to pay the school fees, he told the girl that the government would ensure that she did not have to drop out. Pankhuri Tripathi, a resident of Purdilpur in the Kotwali area here, put forth her appeal for help at a "Janta Darshan" held at the Gorakhnath temple. "I want to study, but my family is unable to pay the school fees," Tripathi told CM. Tripathi, who studies in an English-medium school, shared that her father is differently-abled, her mother works in a shop to support the family and her elder brother is a class 12 student. *—PTI*

Conflict of interest in CEC may impact FCAA cases

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

A group of 60 former civil servants has expressed concerns regarding a potential "conflict of interest" in the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) appointed by the Supreme Court. In an open letter dated June 30, the signatories—including former secretaries, ambassadors, and forest officers—argued that the current four-member CEC, comprising mostly former Indian Forest Service officers, lacks independent experts. They claimed that the panel's composition could undermine the impartiality of its advice in ongoing cases challenging the Forest Conservation Amendment Act (FCAA) of 2023. They urged the Chief Justice of India to include independent experts in the CEC and not rely on the current members for advice on cases related to forests and ecological security. *—PTI*

14th judge refuses IFS officer's whistleblower case

NAINITAL, 1 JULY

A magisterial court has refused to hear a criminal defamation case filed by Indian Forest Service officer Sanjeev Chaturvedi against Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) judge Manish Garg. Additional chief judicial magistrate Neha Kushwaha recused herself from hearing Chaturvedi's case in which he accused Garg of using foul language against him during open court proceedings in 2023. With Kushwaha, the tally of judges who have recused from cases in which Chaturvedi was a party stands at 14. Referring to an order for a suo motu contempt petition against Chaturvedi, Kushwaha pointed to her family relations with Mahara. "In a situation like this, it would not be legally appropriate for the undersigned to hear the present case," she said. *—PTI*

Cabinet gives ₹1.07L cr to boost employability, social security

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The central government on Tuesday approved an Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme with an outlay of Rs 1.07 lakh crore to create 3.5 crore jobs over the next two years through social security schemes run by the retirement fund body EPFO.

The ELI scheme to support job generation, enhance employability and social security across all sectors, with special focus on the manufacturing sector, was approved by the Union Cabinet in a meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

The scheme aims to incentivise the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs in the country over two years, an official statement said. It will provide incentives to employees as well as employers to boost job creation.

Under the scheme, while the first-time employees will get one month's wage (up to Rs 15,000), the employers will be given incentives for a period of two years for generating additional employment, with extended benefits for another two years for the manufacturing sector.

The ELI scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2024–25 as part of the package of five schemes to facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for 4.1 crore youth with a total budget outlay of Rs 2 lakh crore.

The ELI scheme aims to incentivise the creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs in the country over a period of 2 years, it stated.

Out of these, 1.92 crore beneficiaries will be first timers, entering the workforce. The benefits of the scheme would be applicable to jobs created between 1 August, 2025 and 31 July, 2027.

The plan consists two parts, with Part A focused on first timers (employees) and Part B focused on employers. *—PTI*

Jaishankar says India-US ties not only about China

Ties with China not an oversimplification but a misleading one

NEW YORK, 1 JULY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that it is a "very gross oversimplification" and "even misleading at times" to make the India-US relationship about China.

Jaishankar was responding to a question on how much of the India-US relationship is defined by its stance on China.

"I think it's a very gross oversimplification to make India-US about China. In fact, it's not just an oversimplification. I think it's even misleading at times," Jaishankar said on Monday during a conversation with Newsweek CEO Dev Pragad at the publication's headquarters at One World Trade Centre near the 9/11 Memorial in Manhattan.

He said that the India-US relationship is about "so many other things," noting the large Indian community, which contributes significantly to the US.

"I think it's been a game-changer. It has got nothing to do with China," he said.

He stressed that Washington and Delhi have a very strong economic connect.

He added that there are certain realities of the landscape, and one of them is that the relationship between the US and China is not what it used to be, it has acquired a much sharper competitive edge.

Additionally, he also expressed hope that trade negotiations between India and the US would reach a "successful conclusion", emphasising the need for the two countries to find a "meeting ground".

"And I think we'll have to watch this space for the next few days," he said.

"You spoke about trade, yes we are in the middle, hopefully, more than the middle, of a very intricate trade negotiation," Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar was responding to a question on the India-US relationship and the trade negotiations between the two nations. He said that there will have to be give and take.

An Indian delegation is currently in Washington DC and discussions are ongoing over the bilateral trade agreement. *—PTI*

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan Takeshi Iwaya, in New York, USA **PHOTO: PTI**

NEWLY ELECTED

Rao, Madhav are T'gana & Andhra BJP Presidents

HYDERABAD, 1 JULY

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Tuesday appointed new state presidents in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, as part of a wider organisational overhaul ahead of electing a new national PPresident.

In Telangana, senior advocate and ABVP veteran N Ramchander Rao was unanimously elected as state President, replacing Union Minister G Kishan Reddy.

A former MLC, Rao emphasised collective leadership and recalled the sacrifices made by party workers over the years. His appointment is seen as an effort to strengthen the BJP's ideological and grassroots base in a state where it now holds eight Lok Sabha seats and eight MLAs.

However, the decision drew dissent, with Hindutva hardliner MLA T Raja Singh resigning from the party in protest.

In Andhra Pradesh, seasoned BJP leader PVN Madhav took charge, succeeding D Purandeswari.

An OBC and former MLC, Madhav pledged to double party's strength in next elections and reinforce its presence during RSS centenary.

He received congratulations from Cm Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, who stressed importance of unity within NDA alliance.

These changes are part of BJP's internal process, which requires elections in at least 19 of its 37 organisational units before selecting a new national president.

With state elections now complete in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, and others, party is poised to name JP Nadda's successor. *—PTI*

Pak, India exchange prisoners' lists

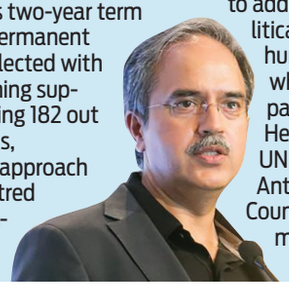
ISLAMABAD, 1 JULY

Pakistan and India on Tuesday exchanged the lists of prisoners in each other's custody, with Islamabad submitting names of 246 Indian or believed-to-be-Indian detainees, including 53 civilians and 193 fishermen. The Agreement on Consular Access, 2008, requires both sides to share the lists of prisoners in each other's custody on 1 January and 1 July, every year. Pakistan handed over a list of 246 Indian or believed-to-be-Indian prisoners to a representative of the Indian High Commission, Islamabad, the Foreign Office said. Simultaneously, India shared a list of 463 Pakistani or believed-to-be-Pakistani prisoners to a diplomat from High Commission for Pakistan, New Delhi. *—PTI*

Pakistan assumes UNSC Presidency

ISLAMABAD, 1 JULY

Pakistan has taken on the Presidency of the UN Security Council for July, marking its two-year term as a non-permanent member. Elected with overwhelming support, securing 182 out of 193 votes, Pakistan's approach will be centred on the principles of the UN Charter, international law, and multilateralism. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad expressed readiness to address complex geopolitical challenges and humanitarian crises while aiming for transparency and inclusivity. He has already briefed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Council's agenda for the month. *—PTI*



Drunk on power: HC raps TN cops over custodial death

MADURAI, TAMIL NADU, 1 JULY

The Madras High Court's Madurai Bench has launched a scathing attack on the Tamil Nadu police over the custodial death of 27-year-old temple guard B Ajith Kumar. The high court questioned the brutality and said that the "police was drunk with power". Arrested on 27 June in a temple jewellery theft, Ajith died in custody after brutal assault by cops.

Justice SM Subramaniam, appalled by the autopsy revealing 44 injuries and the application of chilli powder to the victim's back, mouth, and ears, ordered a judicial probe. The court has demanded detailed reports from the Thirupuvanam Judicial Magistrate and the Dean of Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai.

The case, initially under police, has now been handed over to the CB-CID. The court criticised police for investigating their own, stating the facts "disturbed the conscience" of the judiciary. Five policemen have been arrested for murder following post-mortem findings. A DSP has been suspended, and Sivaganga SP Ashish Rawat has been transferred to "compulsory wait" at DGP's office. Ramanathapuram SP G Chandeesh will hold additional charge.

Chief Minister MK Stalin, announced a CBI probe and confirmed action against senior officers. "This is unjustifiable and cannot be excused," he stated.

Political leaders, including BJP's K Annamalai and Congress MP Karti Chidambaram, condemned the brutality. Annamalai cited over 24 custodial deaths in three years, urging accountability, while Chidambaram demanded prosecution of all involved, including superiors. The viral video shows Ajith sitting on floor, being beaten by a man with a stick. The video also shows two more men standing nearby and watching as the assault takes place. The video was reportedly shot by a temple employee. *—Agencies*

Five policemen have been arrested on charges of murder **PHOTO: X**

Ajith Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

No party symbol or flag in Marathi rally

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the MNS on Tuesday issued a joint public invitation for a rally in Mumbai on 5 July to celebrate "Marathi Vijay Diwas", following the state government's decision to withdraw its order three-language policy in schools.

The joint invitation, titled "Marathicha Awaa", the first official announcement of the event, carries no party symbol or flag, except a graphic image of the state. It mentions the names of cousins Raj Thackeray and Uddhav Thackeray as hosts.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Tuesday said his party head Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) Chief Raj Thackeray will attend the rally. It will mark their first appearance together at a political event in nearly two decades.

Facing mounting opposition to the introduction of Hindi language in Maharashtra schools from classes 1 to 5, the state cabinet on Sunday decided to withdraw two government orders on implementation of three-language policy.

Immediately after the announcement, the two parties said the protest march planned on July 5 against GRs has been cancelled. *—PTI*

Shiv Sena (UBT) Head Uddhav Thackeray and MNS) Chief Raj Thackeray **PHOTO: PTI**

CONG MLA PATOLE SUSPENDED FROM ASSEMBLY

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

Maharashtra witnessed political tension on Tuesday as Congress MLA Nana Patole was suspended from Assembly for a day after demanding action against BJP MLA Babanrao Lonikar and Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate for allegedly insulting farmers. Patole, a former Speaker, climbed the podium, prompting an adjournment.

The opposition walked out in protest, accusing BJP of silencing voices defending farmers.

Lonikar had said farmers receive state benefits because of BJP, while Kokate accused them of misusing loan waivers and mocked crop insurance. *—PTI*

HC stays proceedings against Jagan in activist death case

AMARAVATI, 1 JULY

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has issued an interim order halting all proceedings and investigations against YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for a period of two weeks. This decision follows the tragic death of a party supporter during Reddy's recent visit to Rentapalla village in Palnadu district.

On 18 June, Reddy visited the village to meet the family of a party leader who had taken his own life a year prior, reportedly due to harassment from Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders and police authorities. During Reddy's journey, C Singayya, a YSRCP supporter, was allegedly struck by a vehicle from the convoy and later died from his injuries.

PHOTO: PTI

In response, police filed charges against Reddy, identifying the driver as Accused-1 and Reddy as Accused-2. Counsel for the former Chief Minister, Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy, confirmed that the court has postponed any further proceedings and investigations until the case is reviewed again in two weeks.

Earlier, the High Court had restricted police from taking any coercive action against Reddy until 1 July, and the case will now be reassessed after a fortnight. *—PTI*

5 NATIONS, 8 DAYS

PM begins longest foreign trip in 10 yrs

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 5-nation visit, senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs informed that the Prime Minister will address the parliaments of Ghana, Namibia and Trinidad & Tobago.

In a special briefing on Monday, Dammu Ravi, Secretary (ER) said that in Ghana, the visit is taking place after 30 years.

The visit will see delegation-level talks during which the bilateral relations will be reviewed, and also discuss various ways to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations.

"The next day, Prime Minister will be addressing the parliament and he also will be interacting with the Indian community there, which is about 15,000 in number", Secretary Ravi said in his remarks.

Speaking about PM Modi's visit to Namibia, Secretary Ravi said, "Prime Minister will visit Namibia on 9th July, and this visit is also important. It's coming after 27 years."

Neena Malhotra, Secretary (South) briefed on Modi's visit to Trinidad and Tobago.

In her remarks she said that PM Modi would be visiting Trinidad and Tobago at the invitation of Prime Minister Kamala Prasad Bisessar.

"This marks the first visit by Prime Minister Modi to Trinidad and Tobago as Prime Minister, and is first Bilateral Visit by an Indian Prime Minister to T&T since 1999."

Modi will embark on a five-nation visit from 2 July, during which he will attend the BRICS Summit in Brazil and hold meetings with leaders of Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina and Namibia to strengthen bilateral ties. *—ANI*

The visit will see delegation-level talks during which the bilateral relations will be reviewed, and also discuss various ways to strengthen and deepen bilateral relations **PHOTO: X**

PHOTO: X

India celebrates Doctors' Day to honour Bidhan Roy

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Each year on 1 July, India commemorates National Doctors' Day, recognising the essential contributions of healthcare professionals. This date is particularly poignant, as it marks the birth and death anniversaries of Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, a July physician, freedom fighter, and former Chief Minister of West Bengal. Dr Roy, born on 1 July, 1882, excelled in both mathematics and medicine, eventually becoming one of the first Indian doctors to hold the MRCP and FRCS credentials. He was a key figure during India's freedom movement, serving as a personal physician to leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi. Post-Independence, Dr Roy's efforts significantly advanced medical education and public health in West Bengal, earning him the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour. *—Agencies*

New species of flowering plant found in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, 1 JULY

Forest officials in Arunachal Pradesh have identified a new flowering plant species, Begonia nyishiorum, within the high-altitude forests of the East Kameng district. The discovery was made by the Seppa Forest Division during a challenging expedition and was documented in the esteemed journal Novon: A Journal for Botanical Nomenclature on 23 June Named in tribute to the Nyishi tribe, the largest tribal community in the state, this plant features distinctive crimson-fringed petioles, a characteristic not found in any other Begonia species in Asia. Chief Minister Pema Khandu commended the Seppa Forest Division for this significant discovery, emphasising Arunachal Pradesh's rich ecological heritage and biodiversity. —PTI

NCW takes cognisance of TN bride suicide

CHENNAI, 1 JULY

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has initiated a suo motu inquiry into the tragic suicide of a newly-wed woman in Tamil Nadu, believed to be a consequence of dowry harassment. In response to media reports, NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar urged the Director General of Police (DGP) to conduct a swift and impartial investigation under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. The NCW described such incidents as severe violations of women's rights, necessitating urgent action. They have also demanded a detailed Action Taken Report (ATR) from Tamil Nadu Police within 72 hours. —PTI

BSF jawan's wife raped by in-laws in UP

PILIBHIT, 1 JULY

A woman, married to a Border Security Force (BSF) jawan, has reported multiple instances of rape by her brothers-in-law, accompanied by blackmail using obscene videos. An FIR has been filed against seven individuals, including the in-laws, with one brother-in-law already in custody. The victim disclosed that while her husband was on duty, her mother-in-law would leave her alone with the two brothers-in-law, who then assaulted her and filmed the incidents to extort her silence. They allegedly threatened to release the videos online and subjected her to physical violence. The police have registered charges for rape and assault under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Information Technology Act. *—PTI*

Over 1.5 lakh cusecs of water was released from Pandoh Dam in Beas river, whose level has risen dangerously close to the 2,941 ft mark **PHOTO: PTI**

Himachal bears the brunt as cloudbursts, flood create havoc

5 dead, 16 missing as Mandi gets 253mm rain

MANDI, 1 JULY

Widespread monsoon havoc has left parts of Himachal Pradesh and Odisha battered, with flash floods and cloudbursts causing major destruction and loss of life.

Himachal witnessed 11 cloudburst incidents, four flash floods and a major landslide, most of them in Mandi district, which claimed five lives and left 16 people missing, officials confirmed on Tuesday.

The district recorded a massive 253.8 mm of rainfall since Monday evening. The deceased was reported from Karsog, while around seven people from two families are missing in Syanj.

Deputy Commissioner Apoorv Devgan said numerous people have been rescued and relocated. Villages such as Purana Bazar (Panjrat), Kutti, Baral, Mamel and Bhyal witnessed damage to homes, roads, and farmland. In Laungni panchayat's Syathi village, dozens of houses, cattle sheds and livestock were swept away. Water also entered homes near the Patikari Power Project.

Over 1.5 lakh cusecs of water was released from Pandoh Dam in Beas river, whose level has risen dangerously close to the 2,941 ft mark.

The Chandigarh-Manali highway remains blocked at multiple locations, while alternate routes are open for light vehicles only. Schools have been shut in Mandi and Hamirpur districts.

Meanwhile, in Odisha's Balasore district, floods have impacted around 100 villages across Bhograi, Baliapal, Jaleswar and Basta blocks, following heavy rain and water discharge from Jharkhand. The Subarnarekha and Jalaka rivers remain swollen, with levels still above or near danger marks.

As of Monday, 2,916 people had been evacuated to 17 relief camps. Officials are monitoring the situation in Jajpur district's Dasarathpur, Binjharpur and Korei blocks.

The India Meteorological Department has issued a flash-flood warning for parts of Chamba, Mandi, Hamirpur, Shimla, Sirmaur and Solan over the next 24 hours. *—PTI*

The confluence of the Beas and Suketi rivers flowing in spate after cloudburst in Mandi district on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

KOLKATA RAPE HORROR

Mango terrorised us: Girl students

KOLKATA, 1 JULY

Former and current students of South Calcutta Law College have revealed a history of intimidation and harassment by Monojit 'Mango' Mishra, the prime accused in the recent gang rape of a 24-year-old student on campus. Mishra, a contractual employee and alumnus, was known for clicking photos of female students, morphing them, and circulating them on WhatsApp groups. Multiple complaints of sexual harassment and violence were reportedly ignored due to his political backing by the Trinamool Congress.

Students said Mishra's influence instilled fear across the college, with many considering skipping classes to avoid him. "There wasn't a single girl who wasn't harassed by him," a former student said anonymously. Mishra's violent past includes allegations of assaulting a security guard, vandalism, theft, and a 2013 rustication for stabbing a youth.

Following the June 25 incident, the college expelled Mishra along with co-accused students Zaib Ahmed and Pramit Mukherjee. The governing body, chaired by Trinamool MLA Ashok Kumar Deb, also moved to hold the campus security agency accountable.

Kolkata Police have arrested the three and collected forensic samples for investigation. They also warned against revealing the victim's identity, calling it a serious offence punishable by law. The case has reignited concerns over campus safety and political influence shielding anti-social elements. *—Agencies*

Monojit 'Mango' Mishra **PHOTO: X**

8 dead, 5 injured in TN cracker factory blast

VIRUDHUNAGAR, 1 JULY

At least eight workers, including two women, were killed in a sudden blast at a firecracker manufacturing factory in Sivakasi in the district on Tuesday, police said.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin announced Rs 1 lakh solatium to the kin of the deceased.

The devastating fire gutted the unit and left many injured, police said. Smoke that billowed from the factory as the firecrackers burst, could be seen from a distance.

Police and fire and rescue services personnel who reached the spot rushed the injured to the hospital.

The fire was later brought under control, a fire and rescue services official said. Revenue officials who arrived at the private firecracker manufacturing unit in Chinnakamanpatti near Sivakasi and police are inquiring into the incident.

The deceased are R Mahalingam, C Chellapandian, K Lakshmi, R Ramamurthy, R Punyamurthy, K Ramajayam, M Nagapandi, and G Vairamani. Five people are undergoing treatment. *—PTI*

Man slits girl's throat in hospital

BHOPAL, 1 JULY

A 19-year-old girl was brutally murdered by a man in full public view inside the government district hospital at Narsinghpur, but none of the people around tried to save her, police said on Tuesday.

A video footage of the 27 June murder, which surfaced on Monday, shows Abhishek Koshti, the killer, slitting the throat of Sandhya Chaudhary, a Class 12 student, as bystanders and hospital staff looked on. Some people even walk past as the girl bled to death on the hospital floor.

Abhishek (L) pinned Sandhya by sitting on her chest, and then slashed her throat with a knife.

In a video footage of the crime that surfaced on Monday, Koshti is seen in the footage slapping Sandhya, throwing her to the ground, sitting on her chest and then slashing her throat with a knife.

The display of chilling brutality in broad daylight took place inside the emergency wing, just meters from doctors and guards. The killer then fled the hospital on a bike parked outside.

Terrified by the incident, all patients admitted in the ward left the hospital.

Sandhya had left home around 2pm that day, telling her family she was visiting a friend's sister-in-law in the maternity ward of the hospital. Koshti met her and the two spoke briefly before he killed her. *—Agencies*

MAN SLITS GIRLFRIEND'S THROAT IN FRONT OF HER DAD

MAIRANG, 1 JULY

A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly killing his girlfriend by slitting her throat in front of her father in Meghalaya's Eastern West Khasi Hills district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday evening when the woman, along with his father, went to a market in Mairang Pyndengumiong village to sell their farm produce, a senior officer said. The deceased was Phyrnailin Kharsyntiew, a resident of Mawkhap village.

According to the police officer, eyewitnesses said the accused approached them and got engaged in an argument with the woman.

"All of a sudden, the man slit the throat of her girlfriend," the officer said. The woman's father said the man vented his anger by killing his daughter, as she did not want to continue the relationship. *—PTI*

12 get lifer in 2007 UP murder case

BARABANKI, 1 JULY

A special court in Uttar Pradesh has sentenced 12 men to life imprisonment in connection with a violent clash and murder that occurred 18 years ago. The verdict was delivered on Monday by Special Additional Sessions Judge (SC/ST Act) Veena Narayan.

The convicts were found guilty of murder, attempted murder, rioting, arson, and offences under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Each was fined Rs. 1.18 lakh, prosecution officer Kripa Shankar confirmed.

The case dates back to 4 March, 2007, when Krishna Magan of Saraitha village filed a complaint against Ajay Singh and others, following a dispute allegedly triggered by Magan's election as village head and the cancellation of a ration shop licence held by Singh's ally.

Later that day, Singh and his associates attacked Magan's family, leaving several injured. One victim, Chetram, later died in hospital.

Three accused were acquitted for lack of evidence. Five others from the rival group were sentenced to three years in prison and fined Rs 10,000 each for causing grievous hurt. Five other accused died during the lengthy trial. *—PTI*

Three accused were acquitted for lack of evidence. Five others from the rival group were sentenced to three years in prison.

Girl travelling in car raped, 3 women robbed in Pune

PUNE, 1 JULY

A 17-year-old girl travelling in a car was allegedly sexually assaulted and three other women occupants robbed of gold jewellery by two motorbike-borne unidentified people on a highway in Maharashtra's Pune, police said.

The incident took place around 4.15 am on Monday near Bhigwan on the highway in Daund area when the car in which the victims were travelling halted after the driver wanted to answer nature's call, a police official said.

There were seven persons in the car —the driver aged 70, three women, two 17-year-old boys and a 17-year-old girl.

They belonged to two different families from a village in Junnar tehsil of Pune district and were on way to Pandharpur temple town in neighbouring Solapur district, he said.

"As the driver felt sleepy, he halted the car near a tea stall. When the driver stepped out to answer nature's call, two unidentified men approached the vehicle and threatened the occupants with sharp weapons and robbed gold jewellery. One of the accused then took the minor girl out of the car and sexually assaulted her," the official said.

The duo then fled the spot on their motorcycle. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

62 LAKH VEHICLES IN DELHI WON'T GET PETROL, DIESEL DUE TO BAN ON OLD CARS

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

A fuel ban on old vehicles came into effect in Delhi on Tuesday, as part of the government's efforts to combat air pollution. Under the new rule, petrol vehicles over 15 years old and diesel vehicles over 10 years old are prohibited from refuelling.

To enforce the measure, the Delhi government has installed Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at around 350 petrol stations across the capital. The transport department, in coordination with Delhi Police, Traffic Police, and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), has deployed joint teams at several locations.

At the Dhingra petrol station in Chirag Delhi, enforcement teams were on site from 6am. Sub-Inspector Dharamveer of the Transport Enforcement team said, "The ANPR cameras detect outdated vehicles and trigger hooters to alert staff. Such vehicles are impounded immediately." The ban follows a 2018 Supreme Court order and a 2014 National Green Tribunal directive restricting the use and parking of aged vehicles in the city. *—PTI*

SINCE 2023

UP's 'Operation Conviction' nets over 97,000 criminals

LUCKNOW, 1 JULY

The Uttar Pradesh government's flagship initiative, Operation Conviction, has led to the conviction of 97,158 criminals between July 2023 and mid-June 2025, according to an official statement released on Tuesday.

Launched on 1 July, 2023, the campaign has been described as a "game-changer" by ADG Prosecution Deepesh Juneja, who said 74,388 of the 1,14,029 identified cases have been disposed of so far.

Of those convicted, 68 individuals were sentenced to death, 8,172 were awarded life imprisonment, 1,453 received jail terms of over 20 years, and 87,465 were sentenced to up to 20 years.

The crackdown has particularly focused on organised crime. In 272 cases involving the top 10 most-wanted criminals, 395 accused were convicted. Additionally, 29 of the 69 identified mafia figures have also been brought to justice.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The crackdown has focused on organised crime. In 272 cases involving the top 10 most-wanted criminals, 395 accused were convicted. Additionally, 29 of the 69 identified mafia figures were brought to justice.

The campaign has shown notable results in cases of crimes against children, with 17 death penalties handed out under the POCSO Act—three of them in a single month—and 619 life sentences.

Of the 68 total death sentences, 17 were for POCSO-related crimes and 48 for other heinous offences. On average, 143 cases were resolved and 187 criminals convicted each working day, reflecting the state's commitment to swift and decisive justice. *—PTI*

Break legs of Cong protesters: Orders Odisha cop

BHUBANESWAR, 1 JULY

Tensions are mounting in Odisha after a senior police officer allegedly instructed personnel to "break the legs" of Congress workers during a protest, while a separate incident involving the assault of a senior bureaucrat nearly triggered a mass walkout.

A viral video purportedly shows Bhubaneswar Additional Police Commissioner Narasingha Bhol telling officers to use force during a Congress protest over the Puri Rath Yatra stampede, which killed three people and injured around 50. "Break their legs and take reward from me," he allegedly said. The Congress condemned the remark as undemocratic, accusing the BJP-led state government of authoritarianism. Bhol later claimed he was advising police to act only if protesters turned violent.

OAS officers defer mass leave

Meanwhile, members of the Odisha Administrative Service (OAS) Association threatened mass leave after Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahoo was allegedly assaulted by miscreants, including BJP corporator Jeevan Rout. In response, sanitation workers halted services.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi held emergency meetings and assured the officers that strict action would be taken. The OAS Association agreed to postpone the leave in deference to the CM's appeal. The dual controversies have sparked criticism over the state's handling dissent and bureaucratic protection. *—PTI*

IN THE ASPHALT

In a strange marvel of engineering, the Patna-Gaya main road of Jehanabad district in Bihar was widened around the trees, causing a major safety hazard. The road was widened at a cost of Rs 100 crore. To seemingly avoid the Forest Department 's demand for a compensation for the 14 hectares of land for the tree felling, the engineers dangerously decided against chopping the trees. Locals said that trees had caused several accidents in the region

PHOTO: X

CBI negligence led to case closure: Najib's mother

Fatima Nafis, the mother of JNU student Najeeb Ahmed who went missing in 2016, accused CBI and Delhi Police on Tuesday of "negligence" in her son's case and said that even if she has to knock on the Supreme Court's doors for justice, she will do it.

In a Facebook post, she said she will fight till her last breath.

A Delhi court on Monday allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to close Ahmed's case, saying that the agency "exhausted all options".

Ahmed, a first-year student, went missing from the Mahi-Mandvi hostel of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on 15 October, 2016, after a scuffle with some students allegedly

- Najeeb Ahmed, a first-year student, went missing from the Mahi-Mandvi hostel of JNU on 15 October, 2016, after a scuffle with some students allegedly affiliated with the ABVP

affiliated with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) the previous night.

The case was initially probed by Delhi Police and later transferred to the CBI.

Nafis said her fight is not just for her son, but for every mother who is seeking justice for her child.

"And if I have to go to the Supreme Court of this country, I will go there too," she said.

"It's been... (almost) nine years since my Najeeb went missing. But the negligence shown by Delhi Police and CBI from the very first day has led to this moment -- the court accepted the CBI's closure report," Nafis said in her post.

"Many times, I ask myself — how can I give up hope? How can I let my courage break? He is my son after all. I want my son back. If I have to go to every court in this country for that, I will. I will fight till my last breath," she said.

Neither Delhi Police nor CBI arrested or took any action against the ABVP-linked students, "the goons who assaulted my son and then made him disappear," she charged.

Even the biggest investigative agencies and the entire judicial system have not been able to tell where my son is, Nafis said.

"For years, lies and falsehoods were spread about my son. The Delhi High Court later ordered all such content to be removed from digital and social media platforms," she said.

Nafis, who was at the forefront of protests along with JNU students to demand a fair probe in her son's case, praised those who stood with her.

"Their solidarity and this shared struggle give me strength.

"Throughout this time, when the system tried to silence us, it was students from JNU and from across the country — from colleges and universities like AMU and Jamia — who stood with me. These very children faced police batons on roads and raised their voices for us," she said.

The CBI closed its investigation into the case in October 2018 as its efforts to trace Ahmed did not yield any result. The agency filed its closure report after getting permission from the Delhi High Court.

Nafis' counsel said earlier that this was a "political case" in which the "CBI has succumbed to the pressure of its masters".

While it accepted the CBI's closure report, the court granted liberty to the agency to reopen the investigation on the receipt of any credible information on Ahmed's whereabouts and intimate the court accordingly. *—PTI*

Najeeb Ahmed's mother Fatima Nafees said lies were spread about her son for years ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

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SALAR

Vantara cares for Rath Yatra's 'mad' elephants

Wildlife rehabilitation centre Vantara stepped in with veterinarians, senior mahouts and specially-equipped ambulances when some elephants appeared visibly agitated during the Ahmedabad Rath Yatra last week.

The incident, in which elephants involved in the procession appeared panicked, resulting in chaos and concern among onlookers, also raised concerns about the use of animals in high-stress, crowded environments, according to a statement from Vantara. Following the incident, state forest officials sought assistance from Vantara, an integrated wildlife rescue and rehabilitation facility based in Jamnagar, it said.

"... Their team responded swiftly and professionally, working closely with our officials and local animal handlers to assess the elephants' condition and ensure their safe relocation," said Dr K Ramesh, chief conservator of forests in Gujarat.

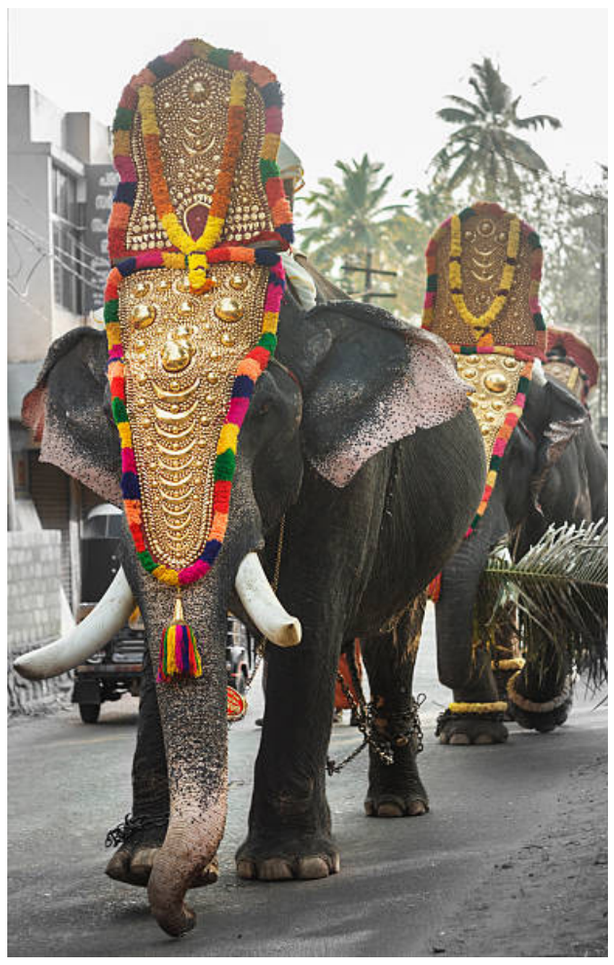
He said the team from Vantara provided immediate medical care, trauma support and behavioural assessments to the affected elephants.

The animals are now under ongoing care at Vantara's facility, which is equipped to handle such cases, he said.

"Vantara dispatched an emergency team of veterinarians, senior mahouts and specially-equipped elephant ambulances to the site," the statement added.

Mahendra Jha, trustee of the Shree Jagannath Mandir Trust Committee, said the intervention ensured timely medical attention and rehabilitation for the elephants.

"We deeply appreciate Vantara's dedication to animal welfare. Their timely intervention ensured that the elephants received the attention and rehabilitation they urgently required," he said.



- The incident, captured on social media, had drawn attention from animal welfare groups and the public, many of whom took to social media to express concern and call for changes in how animals are treated during festivals

The incident, captured on social media, has also drawn attention from animal welfare groups and the public, many of whom took to social media to express concern and call for changes in how animals are treated during festivals, the statement read. Founded as a large-scale conservation initiative, Vantara which means Star of the Forest, aims to provide a safe haven for rescued wildlife including elephants, leopards, reptiles, and birds, it read.

The centre is staffed by veterinarians, zoologists and caregivers, and is built to international standards for animal rehabilitation, it added. *—PTI*

Elephants involved in the Ahmedabad Rath Yatra procession appeared panicked, resulting in chaos ***PHOTO: PTI***

100 people die every hour globally due to loneliness: WHO report

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Commission on Social Connection released its global report revealing that 1 in 6 people worldwide is affected by loneliness, with significant impacts on health and well-being. Loneliness is linked to an estimated 100 deaths every hour—more than 871 000 deaths annually. Strong social connections can lead to better health and longer life, the report said.

"In this report, we pull back the curtain on loneliness and isolation as a defining challenge of our time. Our Commission lays out a road map for how we can build more connected lives and underscores the profound impact this can have on health, educational, and economic outcomes," said Dr Vivek Murthy, Co-chair of the WHO Commission on Social Connection, and former surgeon general of the US.

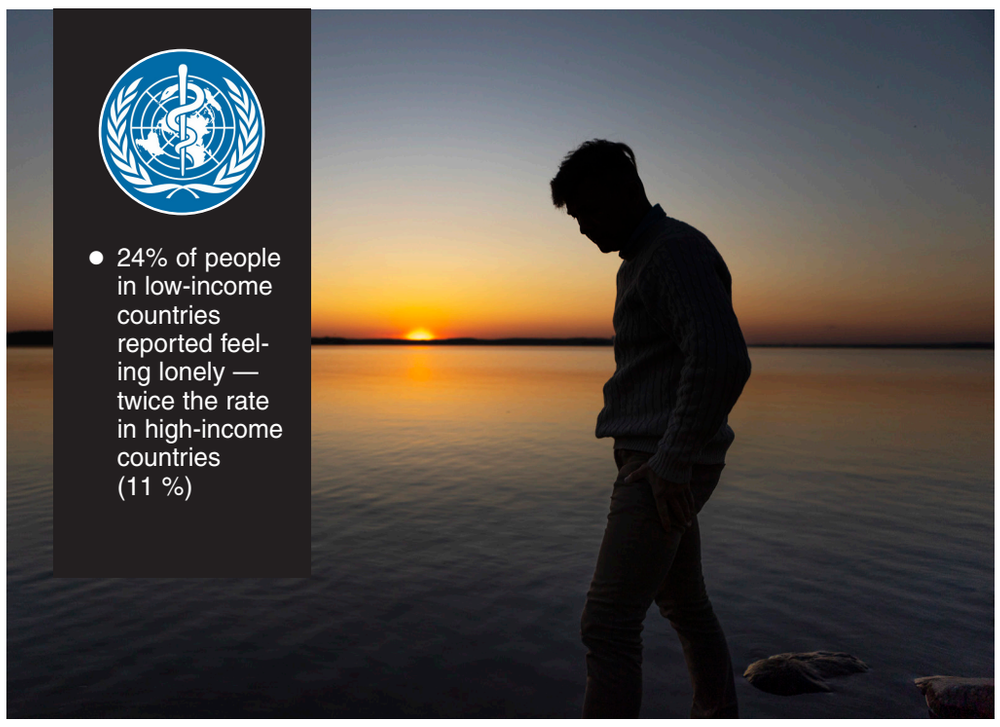
WHO defines social connection as the ways people relate to and interact with others. Loneliness is described as the painful feeling that arises from a gap between desired and actual social connections, while social isolation refers to the objective lack of sufficient social connections.

"In this age when the possibilities to connect are endless, more and more people are finding themselves isolated and lonely," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "Apart from the toll it takes on individuals, families and communities, left unaddressed, loneliness and social isolation will continue to cost society billions in terms of health care, education, and employment. I welcome the Commission's report, which shines a light on the scale and impact of loneliness and isolation and outlines key areas in which we can help people to reconnect in ways that matter most."

Loneliness affects people of all ages, especially youth and people living in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). Between 17–21 per cent of individuals aged 13–29-year-olds reported feeling lonely, with the highest rates among teenagers.

About 24 per cent of people in low-income countries reported feeling lonely — twice the rate in high-income countries (about 11 per cent).

"Even in a digitally connected world, many young people feel alone. As technology reshapes our lives, we must ensure it strengthens—not weakens—human connection. Our report shows that social connection must be integrated into all policies—from digital access to health, education, and employment," said Chido Mpemba, Co-chair of the WHO Commission on Social Connection and Advisor to the African Union Chairperson.



- 24% of people in low-income countries reported feeling lonely — twice the rate in high-income countries (11 %)

While data on social isolation is more limited, it is estimated to affect up to 1 in 3 older adults and 1 in 4 adolescents. Some groups, such as people with disabilities, refugees or migrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and indigenous groups and ethnic minorities, may face discrimination or additional barriers that make social connection harder.

Loneliness and social isolation have multiple causes. They include, for instance, poor health, low income and education, living alone, inadequate community infrastructure and public policies, and digital technologies.

The report underscores the need for vigilance around the effects of excessive screen time or negative online interactions on the mental health and well-being of young people.

Social connection can protect health across the lifespan. It can reduce inflammation, lower the risk of serious health problems, foster mental health, and prevent early death. It can also strengthen the social fabric, contributing to making communities healthier, safer and more prosperous.

In contrast, loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of stroke, heart disease, diabetes, cognitive decline, and premature death. It also affects mental health, with people who are lonely twice as likely to get depressed. Loneliness can also lead to anxiety, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

The impacts extend to learning and employment. Teenagers who felt lonely were 22 per cent more likely to get lower grades or qualifications. Adults who are lonely may find it harder to find or maintain employment and may earn less over time.

At a community level, loneliness undermines social cohesion and costs billions in lost productivity and health care. Communities with strong social bonds tend to be safer, healthier and more resilient, including in response to disasters.

The report of the WHO Commission on Social Connection outlines a roadmap for global action focusing on five key areas: policy, research, interventions, improved measurement (including developing a global Social Connection Index), and public engagement, to shift social norms and bolster a global movement for social connection.

Solutions to reduce loneliness and social isolation exist at multiple levels – national, community and individual – and range from raising awareness and changing national policies to strengthening social infrastructure (e.g., parks, libraries, cafés) and providing psychological interventions.

Most people know what it feels like to be lonely. And each person can make a difference through simple, everyday steps—like reaching out to a friend in need, putting away one's phone to be fully present in conversation, greeting a neighbor, joining a local group, or volunteering.

If the problem is more serious, finding out about available support and services for people who feel lonely is important.

The costs of social isolation and loneliness are high, but the benefits of social connection are far-reaching. *—WHO*

PHOTO: X

Anonymous call leads Mexican cops to 383 bodies

MEXICO CITY, 1 JULY

An anonymous call led Mexican authorities in the border city of Ciudad Juarez to a chilling discovery at a crematorium: 383 bodies and the partial remains of six other people. Chihuahua state prosecutor Cesar Jauregui said on Monday that the people had been dead for at least three or four years. "Who knows what the ulterior motive of these subjects was, because storing that number also makes you think they weren't providing the service," he said. Authorities did not yet know why so many bodies had been stored at the crematorium, which worked with six funeral homes in the city. The bodies were discovered last Thursday. Jauregui said the crematorium's owner and an employee had been arrested. *—PTI*

China sanctions Filipino ex-lawmaker

BANGKOK, 1 JULY

China has imposed sanctions on former Filipino senator Francis Tolentino, prohibiting his entry into the mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the sanctions due to Tolentino's "anti-China" stance, particularly regarding his role in authoring bills that solidify the Philippines' territorial claims in the contested South China Sea. In response, Tolentino declared on X that the sanction is a "badge of honour" and asserts that he will continue to fight for the country's rights. His two key pieces of legislation, the Philippine Maritime Zones Act and the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act, were enacted last November, reaffirming the nation's maritime boundaries against China's extensive claims over the region. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Hasina faces crimes against humanity case

DHAKA, 1 JULY

The indictment hearing in the crimes against humanity case against Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been set for 1 July, the country's crimes tribunal announced on Tuesday. The cases are against Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun for their role in the July-August mass uprising last year, state-run BSS reported. Hasina, whose nearly 16-year Awami League regime was toppled last year in a student-led uprising on 5 August, forcing her to leave the country for India, was accused of mass killings and enforced disappearances earlier in the tribunal. *—PTI*

Europe swelters under punishing heat wave

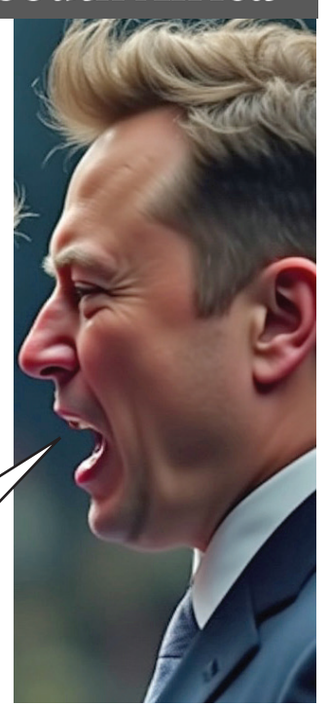
PARIS, 1 JULY

France and the rest of Europe were still in the grips of the first major heat wave this summer with health warnings in effect Tuesday. Punishing temperatures were forecast to reach 40 degrees Celsius in Paris and to stay unusually high in Belgium and the Netherlands. In contrast, temperatures were falling in Portugal, where no red heat warnings were issued. 17 of Italy's 27 major cities were experiencing a heat wave, according to the Health Ministry. This comes as Barcelona recorded its hottest June in a century. *—PTI*

Trump threatens to send Musk packing to South Africa

PHOTO: FREEPIK GENERATE IMAGES

DONALD TRUMP, ELON MUSK SPAR AGAIN



No more Rocket launches, Satellites, or Electric Car Production, and our Country would save a FORTUNE. Without subsidies, Elon would probably have to close up shop and head back home to South Africa

—Donald Trump, US President

It is obvious with the insane spending of this Bill, which increases the debt ceiling by a record FIVE TRILLION DOLLARS that we live in a one-party country – the PORKY PIG PARTY!! Time for a new political party that actually cares about the people

Elon Musk, former DOGE head

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

US President Donald Trump and former DOGE head Elon Musk launched into yet another war of words. Musk claimed that Republicans weren't going to win a single Primary, while Trump said the Tesla CEO's businesses wouldn't survive without government subsidies, suggesting that Musk would "probably have to close up shop and head back home to South Africa".

Musk responded shortly after on X: "I am literally saying CUT IT ALL. Now".

The once firm duo had a massive public fallout towards the end of Musk's tenure as the head of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Although the feud had died down, it seemingly reignited over Musk's repeated criticism of Trump's "Big, Beautiful Bill".

"Every member of Congress who campaigned on reducing government spending and then immediately voted for the biggest debt increase in history should hang their head in shame!" Musk wrote. "And they will lose their primary next year if it is the last thing I do on this Earth."

Musk repeated his ambition of forming a new political party. "It is obvious with the insane spending of this bill, which increases the debt ceiling by a record FIVE TRILLION DOLLARS that we live in a one-party country – the PORKY PIG PARTY!! Time for a new political party that actually cares about the people."

Trump hit back at Musk with the EV angle he used during their first public meltdown.

"Musk knew, long before he so strongly endorsed me for President, that I was strongly against the EV mandate." Trump wrote on his Truth Social.

"Electric cars are fine, but not everyone should be forced to own one.... Elon may get more subsidies than any human being in history, by far, and without subsidies, Elon would probably have to close up shop and head back home to South Africa." *—PTI*

'USAID cuts could lead to 1.4 crore deaths globally'

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Steep funding cuts to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) could result in over 1.4 crore preventable deaths by 2030, a third of which could be among children aged under five, according to a study published in The Lancet journal. Monday was the last day for the USAID as an independent agency.

The study said the fund cuts could reverse decades of progress and that for many low and middle-income countries, the resulting shock would be comparable in scale to a "global pandemic" or a "major armed conflict". The cuts "risk abruptly halting – and even reversing – two decades of progress in health among vulnerable populations," study coordinator Davide Rasella, research professor at the Barcelona Institute for Global Health in Spain, said.

"For many low- and middle-income countries, the resulting shock would be comparable in scale to a global pandemic or a major armed conflict," Rasella said. *—PTI*

Trump to visit Florida's isolated detention centre

Trump is making a day trip to Florida's Everglades on Tuesday for a firsthand look at a new immigration detention facility. The detention facility is on an isolated airstrip and could house 5,000 detainees. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt noted that the centre is "informally known as Alligator Alcatraz"

POTUS signs exec order ending US sanctions on Syria

Trump signed an executive order on Monday ending US sanctions on Syria. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said the move was designed to "promote and support the country's path to stability and peace". However, sanctions will remain in place on ousted former president Bashar Assad, his family and aides.

Trump threatens Japan with tariffs over rice

Trump is threatening to impose higher tariffs on Japanese exports to the US over the country's "unwillingness to buy American-grown rice". "They won't take our RICE, and yet they have a massive rice shortage. In other words, we'll just be sending them a letter, and we love having them as a Trading Partner," Trump said.

Mamdani poised to win in NYC mayoral primary

The winner of New York City's Democratic Mayoral Primary, between progressive Zohran Mamdani of Indian American decent and former Gov Andrew Cuomo, is likely to be finalised Tuesday when the city's board of elections announces the next round of results. Mamdani last week gained a commanding lead over Cuomo.

Iowa removes gender identity protections

Iowa became the first state to remove gender identity from its civil rights code under a law that took effect Tuesday, meaning transgender and nonbinary residents are no longer protected from discrimination in their job, housing and other aspects of life. The law removes the ability for people to change the sex designation.

US turns focus to naturalised citizens

A new memo by the Justice Department aims to strip US citizenship from naturalised Americans who are convicted of certain crimes. An estimated 25 million naturalised citizens – individuals who were born abroad but became US citizens through the naturalisation process – are currently living in the United States.

Court suspends Thai PM over leaked calls

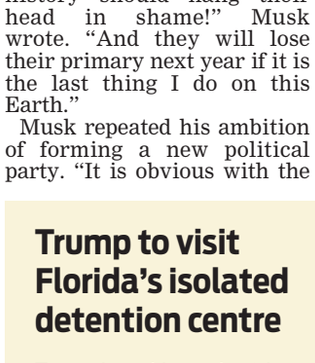


PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

BANGKOK, 1 JULY

Thailand's Constitutional Court suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra from office Tuesday pending an ethics investigation over a leaked phone call with a senior Cambodian leader.

The judges voted unanimously Tuesday to take the petition accusing her of a breach of ethics, and voted 7 to 2 to suspend her from duty as a prime minister. The court gave Paetongtarn 15 days to give evidence to support her case.

Paetongtarn has faced growing dissatisfaction over her handling of the latest border dispute with Cambodia, involving an armed confrontation on 28 May in which one Cambodian soldier was killed. The leaked phone call while she engaged in diplomacy with Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen set off a string of complaints and public protests.

Paetongtarn said after the court order that she would accept the process and would do her best to defend herself, as she had no other intentions but to protect the country and preserve peace.

Deputy Prime Minister Suriya Jungrungruangkit is expected to become the acting prime minister, although there's been no official confirmation. *—PTI*

Kidney patients sit near Shifa Hospital, destroyed by Israeli strikes, in Gaza City on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Ukraine destroys Russian plant after record drone strikes in June

KYIV, 1 JULY

A Ukrainian drone struck a Russian industrial plant some 1,300km from Ukraine, a local official said on Tuesday, after Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy prioritised the weapon's development and Russia pounded Ukraine with a monthly record of drones in June.

Both sides in the more than three-year war following Russia's February 2022 invasion of its neighbour have raced to improve drone technology and enhance their use on the battlefield.

They have deployed increasingly sophisticated and deadlier drones, turning the war into a testing ground for the new weaponry.

Ukraine is under severe strain from a Russian push at places on the roughly 1,000km front line, but analysts say its defences are largely holding firm. With recent direct peace talks delivering no progress on US-led international efforts to halt the fighting, Russia and Ukraine are bulking up their arsenals.

Ukrainian drones hit a fuel depot in Engels and the Progress plant in Michurinsk on Tuesday PHOTO: X

RUSSIA RECLAIMS LUHANSK

Meanwhile, a Russia-appointed official in Luhansk region – one of four regions Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in September 2022 despite not fully controlling a single one – said on Monday that Moscow's forces have overrun all of it.

If confirmed, that would make Luhansk the first Ukrainian region to be fully occupied by Russia after more than three years of war. *—PTI*

Turkish police detain 4 over Prophet caricature

ANKARA, 1 JULY

Turkish police on Monday detained a cartoonist and three other employees of a satirical magazine over a caricature depicting the Prophet Muhammad, an act that also sparked an angry protest outside the magazine's Istanbul office, officials and reports said.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced on X that Leman magazine's cartoonist was taken under custody for questioning.

The minister also shared a video of the cartoonist — identified only by his initials DP — being taken into custody on a stairwell, with hands cuffed behind the back.

LeMan on Monday denied the allegations and insisted the drawing was intended to portray a Muslim man named Muhammad and was meant to highlight the suffering of Muslims. *—PTI*

Bibi to visit US next week for Gaza ceasefire talks

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

President Donald Trump will host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for talks at the White House next Monday, said two US administration officials.

The visit comes as the US leader has begun stepping up his push on the Israeli government and Hamas to broker a ceasefire and hostage agreement and bring about an end to the war in Gaza.

The officials were not authorised to comment on the visit that hasn't been formally announced and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Netanyahu's visit follows Israeli minister Ron Dermer's visit to Washington this week for talks with senior officials on a Gaza ceasefire, Iran and other matters.

74 KILLED IN GAZA

Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed at least 74 people in Gaza on Monday with airstrikes that left 30 dead at Al-Baqa Cafe in Gaza City and gunfire that left 23 dead as Palestinians tried to get desperately needed food aid, witnesses and health officials said.

IRAN A CYBER THREAT

The FBI and federal cybersecurity officials warned on Monday that a ceasefire between Iran and Israel has not ended the threat of cyberattacks from hacking groups supportive of Tehran. They said hacking groups affiliated with or supportive of Tehran may still seek to disrupt or disable critical infrastructure systems in the US. *—PTI*

GLOBAL WARMING

Parched, Himalayan village in Nepal relocates

SAMJUNG, 1 JULY

The Himalayan village of Samjung did not die in a day.

Perched in a wind-carved valley in Nepal's Upper Mustang, more than 13,000ft (3,962m) above sea level, the Buddhist village lived by slow, deliberate rhythms — herding yaks and sheep and harvesting barley under sheer ochre cliffs honeycombed with "sky caves" — 2,000-year-old chambers used for ancestral burials, meditation and shelter.

Then the water dried up. Snow-capped mountains turned brown and barren as, year after year, snowfall declined. Springs and canals vanished and when it did rain, the water came all at once, flooding fields and melting away the mud homes. Families left one by one, leaving the skeletal remains of a community transformed by climate change.

Samjung, an ancient village in the Himalayas ran out of water. Then, it moved and started over PHOTO: X

The Hindu Kush and Himalayan mountain regions —stretching from Afghanistan to Myanmar — hold more ice than anywhere else outside the Arctic and Antarctic. Their glaciers feed major rivers that support 240 million people in the mountains — and 1.65 billion more downstream.

Such high-altitude areas are warming faster than lowlands. Glaciers are retreating and permafrost areas are thawing as snowfall becomes scarcer and more erratic, according to the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development or ICMOD.

Climate change is quietly reshaping where people can live and work by disrupting farming, water access, and weather patterns, said Neil Adger, a professor of human geography at the University of Exeter.

In the world's highest mountains, Samjung isn't the only community to have to start over, said Amina Maharjan, a migration specialist at ICMOD. Some villages move only short distances, but inevitably the key driver is lack of water.

"The water scarcity is getting chronic," she said.

It hasn't snowed in Upper Mustang for nearly three years. *—PTI*

Starmer faces revolt in party over welfare reform

LONDON, 1 JULY

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is grappling with internal dissent within the Labour Party over welfare reforms, marking his first anniversary in power amid a challenging economic landscape. Starmer's government, which enjoyed a landslide victory in 2024, is facing a rebellion that has seen more than 120 Labour lawmakers expressing opposition to proposed cuts to disability benefits.

The reforms, aimed at raising the threshold for disability payments, have sparked significant backlash, leading the government to offer concessions to mitigate dissent. Starmer's approval ratings have plummeted, drawing comparisons to Liz Truss's brief tenure as Prime Minister during economic turmoil.

Despite achieving milestones such as raising the minimum wage and enhancing workers' rights, Starmer's government has made unpopular decisions, including raising taxes and cutting benefits, all while facing rising inflation and slow economic growth. Political analysts warn that the current rebellion indicates a lack of leadership and could complicate future policy decisions.

Starmer has acknowledged missteps, with promises that there is still time to rectify issues before the next election, which is not required until 2029. However, ongoing tensions within the party may present further challenges ahead. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Gold rallies ₹1,200 to settle at ₹98,670 per 10/g

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Cutting short the seven-day losing streak, gold prices rebounded by Rs 1,200 to Rs 98,670 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday due to fresh buying by stockists in line with strong global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 97,470 per 10g on Monday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by Rs 1,100 to Rs 98,150 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. In addition, silver prices rallied by Rs 2,000 to Rs 1,04,800 per kilograms (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. On the global front, spot gold rose by USD 44.01 or 1.33 per cent to USD 3,346.92 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 25P to close at 85.51 against USD

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

Rupee appreciated 25 paise to close at 85.51 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, supported by weakness of the American currency in the overseas market and a positive tone in the domestic equities amid rise in risk appetite. Forex traders said the US dollar is trading at lowest levels since February 2022 as President Donald Trump's growing influence on Federal Reserve policy revived fears over the central bank's independence. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.66 against the greenback. During the day, it witnessed an intraday high of 85.34. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.46 per cent to 96.43.*—PTI*

Govt extends tenure of FSIB chief, members

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The government has extended by another one year the tenure of the chairperson and other members of the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB), the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions. With the extension, the chairperson and other members would continue to serve the Bureau till 30 June, 2026. The FSIB is headed by Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of Department of Personnel and Training. The term of the FSIB was also extended by one year. For insurance sector appointment, Usha Sangwan, former Managing Director, LIC, A V Girija Kumar, former Chairman and Managing Director, Oriental Insurance Company Ltd and Sujay Banarji, former whole-time member (distribution), Irdai too have been given extension as part-time members.*—PTI*

Sri Mandir secures $20M in fresh funding round

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Spiritual technology firm AppsForBharat, owner of the Sri Mandir platform, has successfully raised USD 20 million (approximately Rs 175 crore) in a funding round led by Susquehanna Asia Venture Capital, the company announced on Tuesday. Existing investors, including Nandan Nilekani-backed Fundamentum, Elevation Capital, and Peak XV Partners, also participated in this funding round. In a statement, the firm revealed, "AppsForBharat, the parent company of India's largest devotional platform, Sri Mandir, today announced that it has raised Rs 175 crore (USD 20M) in a Series C funding round." The funds will be used in over 20 temple towns in India. The investment will strengthen services, establish fulfilment and logistics hubs, and develop AI-driven features aimed at enhancing user engagement.*—PTI*

ATF price hiked by 7.5%, LPG rates cut by ₹58.5

After three cuts, ATF price was increased by ₹6,271.5

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The price of jet fuel (ATF) was sharply increased by 7.5 per cent on Tuesday, while the cost of LPG used in commercial establishments was reduced by Rs 58.50 per cylinder, reflecting shifts in international benchmark rates.

After three rounds of price cuts, aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was increased by Rs 6,271.5 per kilolitre, or 7.5 per cent, to Rs 89,344.05 per kl in the national capital - home to one of the busiest airports in the country, according to state-owned fuel retailers.

The increase amounts to half of the total reduction implemented over three monthly installments since April.

ATF price was last reduced by Rs 2,414.25 per kl (2.82 per cent) to Rs 83,072.55 per kl on June 1. Prior to that, rates were cut by 4.4 per cent (Rs 3,954.38 per kl) on 1 May and a steep reduction of 6.15 per cent (Rs 5,870.54 per kl) on 1 April.

Alongside the ATF price increase, oil firms also reduced the price of commercial LPG by Rs 58.5 per 19-kg cylinder on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

The increase in ATF price is in line with the spurt in international oil rates that followed Israel's attack on Iran last month.

This increase will add to the burden on commercial airlines, for whom fuel makes up for almost 40 per cent of the operating cost.

Alongside, oil firms reduced the price of commercial LPG by Rs 58.5 per 19-kg cylinder. Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1,665 in the national capital and Rs 1,616.50 in Mumbai.

This is the fourth straight reduction in commercial LPG rates. Prices were last reduced by Rs 24 per 19-kg cylinder on 1 June. *—PTI*

Among Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics was the lead gainer, rising by 2.51 per cent PHOTO: PTI

Sensex rises by 91pts, Nifty 25pts

MUMBAI, 1 JULY

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher in a range-bound trade on Tuesday, helped by gains in index heavyweight Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 90.83 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at 83,697.29 with 13 of its constituents closing higher and 17 in the red. During the day, it rallied 267.83 points or 0.32 per cent to 83,874.29.

The 50-share NSE Nifty gained 24.75 points or 0.10 per cent to close at 25,541.80.

Among Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics was the lead gainer, rising by 2.51 per cent after the company announced securing orders worth Rs 528 crore.

Reliance Industries advanced 1.84 per cent as analysts expressed optimism over the launch of a solar manufacturing facility.

Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank were also among the major gainers.

Axis Bank, Trent, Eternal and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.18 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.07 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, telecommunication rose by 0.52 per cent, energy by 0.46 per cent, consumer durables by 0.43 per cent and metal by 0.30 per cent.

FMCG declined 0.68 per cent, power (0.41 per cent), utilities (0.32 per cent), IT (0.24 per cent) and BSE Focused IT (0.25 per cent).

As many as 2,025 stocks advanced while 1,985 declined and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.22 per cent to USD 66.56 a barrel. *—PTI*

Dollar faces biggest fall since 1970, down by 10%: Report

WASHINGTON, 1 JULY

Riding on continued uncertainty around trade deals and President Donald Trump's spending bill that sparked fiscal worries, the US dollar on Tuesday suffered it deepest value loss against the euro since 1970, a report said.

The monetary policy easing by the Federal Reserve this year ahead of a slew of US economic data this week spurred dollar-selling, sending the euro to a near four-year high of USD 1.179. The currency surged 13.8 per cent in the January–June period, its strongest-ever first half performance, LSEG data showed.

Trump keeps pressing the Federal Reserve to ease monetary policy, sending Fed Chair Jerome Powell a list of central bank interest rates around the world and saying the US rate should be between Japan's 0.5 per cent and Denmark's 1.75 per cent.

Pound Sterling was steady at USD 1.3737, while the Japanese yen reached 143.68 per dollar. The yen gained 9 per cent in the first half of the year, its strongest since 2016.

The dollar index slipped to 96.688, its lowest since February 2022.

"In 2025, the US exceptionalism narrative has been called into question. Treasury auction demand has been under pressure in recent months, and foreign investor appetite has reduced," said Nathan Hamilton, investment analyst at Aberdeen Investments.

"Bear steepening of the Treasury yield curve, coupled with USD weakness, suggests financial markets are less willing to look through the relative credit risk metrics of the U.S. on the back of its status as the world's reserve currency," he said. *—Agencies*

The dollar index slipped to 96.688, its lowest since 2022 PHOTO: PTI

RAYMOND REALTY SHARES LISTED ON STOCK EXCHANGES

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The shares of Raymond Realty Ltd got listed on the stock exchanges on Tuesday post its demerger process.

The stock started trading at Rs 1,005 on the BSE. It later jumped 4.99 per cent to Rs 1,055.20 from the opening price. At the NSE, the stock got listed at Rs 1,000. Shares of the firm later climbed 5 per cent to Rs 1,050.

The Raymond Group company's market valuation stood at Rs 6,564.84 crore. The company is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. After demerging its lifestyle business into a separate listed entity in 2024, Raymond Ltd is carving out real estate vertical into a separate listed entity and will focus only on engineering business.

Raymond Realty will not sign up development deals if it doesn't see profit margins of at least 20 per cent, the company's top officials said on Monday. *—PTI*

The two companies executed the non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday PHOTO: PTI

CIL, Hindustan Copper unite in mineral sector

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

State-owned CIL on Tuesday said it has signed an MoU with Hindustan Copper to work together in the critical mineral sector.

The two companies executed the non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday to collaborate across various aspects in the copper and critical minerals sectors, CIL said in a BSE filing.

Earlier, CIL and IREL (India) Ltd had signed a non-binding MoU to cooperate and collaborate on the development of critical minerals. The MoU aims to promote the development of mutually agreed assets of critical minerals, including mineral sands and rare earth elements.

CIL accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal production.

Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth are essential raw materials required to fuel the growth of rapidly-growing clean energy technologies and their expanding uses ranging from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles and battery manufacturing. *—PTI*

US JUDGE ALLOWS ANTITRUST SUIT AGAINST APPLE

NEW JERSEY, 1 JULY

A federal judge on Monday rebuffed Apple's request to throw out a US government lawsuit alleging the technology trendsetter has built a maze of illegal barriers to protect the iPhone from competition and fatten its profit margins.

The 33-page opinion from US District Judge Xavier Neals in New Jersey will enable an antitrust lawsuit filed by US Justice Department against Apple to proceed.

Apple has sought to dismiss the lawsuit, arguing the Justice Department had distorted the contours of the smartphone market and made a series of other misinterpretations that warranted the case be thrown out.

But Neals decided there is enough evidence to support the Justice Department's market definitions and concluded the case's key allegations merited further examination at trial. *—PTI*

India & UAE's Ras Al Khaimah discuss green steel, limestone deal

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, the Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), have engaged in discussions regarding strategic opportunities, particularly in securing long-term access to low-silica limestone and potential collaborations in green steel.

Kumaraswamy was in Dubai to inaugurate the MECON and NMDC offices, where both parties explored prospects in green hydrogen and trade partnerships involving value-added steel exports from India. They also discussed the establishment of calcined lime production units leveraging RAK's limestone resources and natural gas.

The Minister emphasised the importance of steel as a foundational material in various sectors, positioning RAK as an ideal partner in India's strategy for next-generation steel resources. The new NMDC office aims to facilitate mineral asset acquisitions and strategic ventures to diversify the sourcing of critical minerals essential for India.

MECON's operations in Dubai will focus on the execution of industrial projects, including the design of oil and gas infrastructure and consultation for steel plant expansion, with an emphasis on green steel and smart technologies. *—PTI*

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy meets Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasim in UAE PHOTO: PTI

Kalpataru surges 9%; HM, Shadowfax file for IPOs

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Shares of real estate developer Kalpataru Ltd on Tuesday made a flat market debut against the issue price of Rs 414, but later bounced back and jumped over 9 per cent. The stock started trading at Rs 414.10 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock got listed at par with the issue price of Rs 414. Later, it surged 9.37 per cent to Rs 452.80 apiece.

Meanwhile, auto parts maker Hero Motors (HM) has filed draft papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 1,200 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

Logistics service provider Shadowfax Technologies also filed for an IPO through a confidential pre-filing route, with an aim to raise Rs 2,000–2,500 crore, industry sources familiar with the development said. *—PTI*

Shell acquires Raj Petro to boost lubricant wing

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Shell Lubricants has successfully completed its acquisition of Raj Petro Specialities Pvt Ltd, bolstering its lubricants portfolio and expanding its customer base in India. The financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed; however, Shell has acquired 100 per cent equity interest in Raj Petro from Brenntag Group.

The acquisition is strategic for Shell as it seeks to strengthen its presence in India, a key growth market. Raj Petro, established over 80 years ago and headquartered in Mumbai, operates manufacturing facilities in Chennai and Silvassa, producing a diverse range of products including transformer oils, white oils, waxes, and lubricants.

PHOTO: X

Jason Wong, Shell's Executive Vice President for Global Lubricants, stated that the addition of Raj Petro will maximise value for Shell through a complementary product range and increased business scale, thereby positioning Shell Lubricants for further growth. Raj Petro has a global footprint with partnerships extending to around 100 countries, catering to sectors such as power transmission, personal care, and pharmaceuticals. *—PTI*

'SUPER INTELLIGENCE AT SIGHT'

Indian researcher ditches Altman for Zuck

BENGALURU, 1 JULY

Meta has ignited a major talent war in Silicon Valley, luring top researchers away from OpenAI with signing bonuses reportedly reaching USD 100 million. Among the high-profile departures is Trapit Bansal, a key figure behind OpenAI's reinforcement learning programme and its first reasoning model, o1. Bansal, an alumnus of IIT Kanpur and IISc Bangalore, announced he was "thrilled" to be joining Meta, hinting at work on advanced superintelligence systems.

These hires are part of Meta's new Superintelligence Labs (MSL), a division led by Alexandr Wang and Nat Friedman. CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the lab's goal is to build AI systems that can outperform humans—a "new era for humanity."

Meta's latest recruits include elite researchers from OpenAI who worked on GPT-4o and other landmark models. Their sudden exit has shaken OpenAI leadership. "It feels like someone broke into our home and stole something," wrote Mark Chen, OpenAI's Chief Research Officer.

In response, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman acknowledged Meta's "giant offers" but said the company remains focused on mission and innovation. "It's not enough to catch up—you have to actually innovate," he said.

While Meta banks on scale, compute power and speed, OpenAI is doubling down on purpose and loyalty. Some insiders worry Meta's aggressive hiring could cause internal friction or dilute focus.

With AI superintelligence on the horizon, the real battle isn't just over technology—but the handful of minds capable of creating it. *—Agencies*

Trapit Bansal, Mark Zuckerberg

PHOTO: X

PHOTO: PCB

Pakistan's Shadab faces lengthy layoff over injury

KARACHI, 1 JULY

Pakistan's white-ball vice-captain, Shadab Khan, is set for a three-month spell on the sidelines due to a recurring shoulder injury. A PCB source confirmed on Tuesday that the 26-year-old leg-spinning all-rounder will undergo surgery in London, followed by an extended rehabilitation period. Shadab, who recently featured in Pakistan's 3–0 home series win over Bangladesh, is now ruled out of upcoming white-ball tours to Bangladesh and the West Indies, as well as a home series against Afghanistan. He is also likely to miss the Asia Cup if it goes ahead in September. With over 180 international appearances, Shadab was also recently drafted into Australia's Big Bash League before the injury setback. —*PTI*

Cricketer Siraj opens restaurant in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 1 JULY

Indian cricketer Mohammed Siraj has stepped into the culinary world with the opening of his first restaurant, Joharfa, in central Hyderabad. The eatery features a diverse menu blending Mughlai spices, Persian and Arabian cuisine, alongside Chinese specialities.

"Joharfa is very close to my heart," said Siraj in a statement. "Hyderabad gave me my identity — this is my way of giving back, creating a space where people can enjoy food that feels like home." Run by seasoned chefs, Joharfa prides itself on fresh, high-quality ingredients and traditional techniques.

Siraj joins a growing list of athletes-turned-entrepreneurs, following the likes of Tendulkar, Ganguly, and Kohli, who also ventured into the food industry. —*PTI*

Bonmatí rejoins Spain after hospitalisation

MARID, 1 JULY

Aitana Bonmatí has rejoined Spain's squad ahead of the Women's Euro 2025, just three days before their opening match against Portugal in Bern. The two-time Ballon d'Or winner had been hospitalised with viral meningitis after developing a high fever on Friday, putting her participation in doubt. The Spanish Football Federation released photos of Bonmatí arriving in Switzerland and greeting head coach Montse Tomé. Although her return lifts team morale, it remains unclear if she will be fit to play. Spain, the reigning World Cup and Nations League champions, are seeking their first European Championship title. They will also face Belgium and Italy in Group B. Bonmatí was instrumental in Spain's 2023 World Cup triumph and plays for Barcelona. —*PTI*

A spinner or two: India in a selection dilemma

India needs 20 wickets for a comeback against England

BIRMINGHAM, 1 JULY

Coach Ryan ten Doeschate said India are grappling to find a team combination that doesn't compromise on batting depth and yet has the bowlers to take 20 wickets PHOTO: PTI

India will need to shed their conservative selection approach and give themselves the best chance to take 20 wickets on what is expected to be another batting surface in the second Test against England, beginning here on Wednesday.

By the team management's own admission, India missed a specialist bowler at Leeds, Kuldeep Yadav to be specific, as England comfortably chased down a record 371 on day five of a game that the visitors should have won.

In the words of assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate, India are grappling to find a team combination that doesn't compromise on batting depth and yet has the bowlers to take 20 wickets.

"In terms of managing the strategy there, we're looking at each bowler individually, feeling what we feel they can get wickets-wise. And then it's just trying to balance up and trying to calculate as best you can what the best chance of getting into the Test match.

"But you need 20 wickets. So the attacking party is obviously finding someone who can get wickets as well. And we are grappling with that. We don't stop talking about that. We're trying to figure it out," Doeschate admitted.

JADEJA'S SLIP WORRIES TEAM

Ravindra Jadeja's inability to make decisive inroads on the fifth-day Headingley track raised the question why he could not be as effective as he is on Indian turners. On the final day of the opening Test, Ben Duckett reverse swept Jadeja out of the match in a chase of 371. Jadeja could not turn the ball from the rough created outside Duckett's off-stump by the Indian pacers.

As India team is pondering over best combination, question arises if Jadeja should play at Edgbaston after a match-haul of 1/172 in 47 overs. On the fifth day he bowled 24 overs and managed 1/102. If India are without Jasprit Bumrah, then logically, they shouldn't be playing two finger spinners in Jadeja and Washington Sundar.

In that case, Kuldeep Yadav and Washington (whose batting skills match Jadeja's) can play since it would be difficult to stop rampaging English batters on a good batting surface without a spinner. —*PTI*

PERFORMANCE AT T20I

Mandhana moves to third in ICC T20I Rankings

DUBAI, 1 JULY

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday moved up one spot to be ranked third in the ICC rankings for batters in women's T20 Internationals.

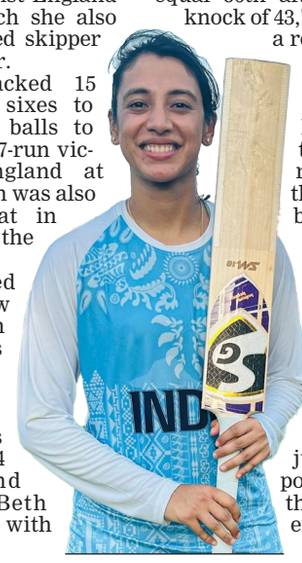
Mandhana, who is already world No. 1 in ODIs, made the leap after her maiden century in the opening T20I of the five-match series against England last week in which she also stood-in for injured skipper Harmanpreet Kaur.

Mandhana smacked 15 fours and three sixes to make 112 off 62 balls to power India to a 97-run victory against England at Nottingham, which was also the biggest defeat in terms of runs for the hosts.

The left-handed Indian opener now has a career-high of 771 rating points and is ranked third, behind West Indies' Hayley Matthews, who is second with 774 points, and Australia's Beth Mooney at the top with 794 points.

Among other Indian batters, Shafali Verma and Harleen Deol also made gains.

"Fellow Indian opener Shafali Verma gains one place to move to 13th on the same rankings list following her innings of 20 in the same match against England, while teammate Harleen Deol re-enters the batter rankings in equal 86th after a quickfire knock of 43," the ICC said in a release.



Meanwhile, England fast bowler Lauren Bell moved up two places to reach fourth in the rankings for bowlers.

The ICC added, "Pakistan spinner Sadia Iqbal remains at the top of the list for T20I bowlers, but it's tight at the top with just 44 rating points separating the top 10 players." —*PTI*

Giovanni's 153mph serve beats Wimbledon record

LONDON, 1 JULY

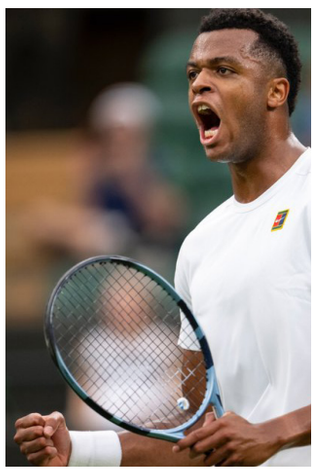


PHOTO: X/ Wimbledon

Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard created a tournament record with a 153mph serve against fifth seed Taylor Fritz during his first-round match of Wimbledon 2025 on Monday.

Perricard won the opening two sets before Fritz bounced back to take the next two, leaving the match hanging at 7-6 (6), 7-6 (8), 6-4, 7-6 (6) before the match was suspended.

Perricard on Monday advanced the previous Wimbledon mark of 148mph set by Taylor Dent in 2010. Fritz, however, not only managed to put his return in play but also eventually won the point.

ALCARAZ VS FOGNINI

Carlos Alcaraz, locked in a five-set struggle at Centre Court, on Monday told his coach how Fabio Fognini – 38 years old, retiring after this season, winless in 2025 – looked as if he could keep playing until he's 50."I don't know why it's his last Wimbledon," Alcaraz said later, "because the level he has shown, he can still play three or four more years. Unbelievable."

The two-time defending champion at the All England Club needed to go through more than 4 1/2 hours of back-and-forth shifts against the much-older and much-less-accomplished Fognini before emerging with a 7-5, 6-7 (5), 7-5, 2-6, 6-1 victory in the first round.

It wasn't supposed to be that tough. "Didn't expect to play five sets against him," Fognini said. "I had my chance."

— *Agencies*

Al Hilal stuns Man City 4–3 in CWC

ORLANDO, 1 JULY

Marcos Leonardo scored his second goal on a rebound in the 112th minute, and Al Hilal stunned Manchester City 4-3 on Monday night, eliminating the Premier League power from the Club World Cup (CWC) in the round of 16.

In a back-and-forth thriller at Camping World Stadium, the Saudi Arabian club took the lead three times, including twice in extra time. Kalidou Koulibaly put Al Hilal ahead 3-2 in the 94th minute, but Phil Foden — who entered as a substitute four minutes earlier — equalized in the 104th.

Leonardo finally put Man City away. Goalkeeper Ederson saved a header by Sergej Milinkovic-Savic from inside the penalty box and the ball deflected to Leonardo, who redirected it with his right foot as he fell to the pitch near the left post.

Al Hilal moved on to face Fluminense of Italy, which took down Inter Milan earlier Monday. Leonardo also scored in the 46th minute to even the match at 1-1. Bernardo Silvan opened the scoring in the ninth minute for Man City.

Manchester City nearly won it regulation in the final seconds of added time on a counterattack that was thwarted by a hard challenge. Referees did not call a penalty, and Man City coach Pep Guardiola ran onto the field to argue the decision after the whistle. —*PTI*

Al Hilal has now moved ahead to face Fluminense of Italy, which took down Inter Milan on Monday PHOTO: PTI

India A squad fixed for Europe Hockey Tour

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

Hockey India has unveiled a 20-member squad for the Indian men's A team's exposure tour to Europe from 8 to 20 July, designed to provide crucial international experience. The team will engage in eight matches against France, Ireland, the Netherlands, England, and Belgium.

Sanjay will lead the squad, with Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh as vice-captain. Coaches aim to harness these high-intensity matches to test the depth and readiness of India's talent pool as they build a robust pipeline for the senior team.

The squad includes goalkeepers Pawan and Mohit Honnenahalli Shashikumar, defenders Pratap Lakra and Varun Kumar, midfielders like Poovanna Chandura Boby, and forwards Angadbir Singh and Venkatesh Kenche, among others. The first match is set against Ireland on 8 July. —*PTI*

SABALENKA OPPOSES BEST-OF-FIVE SETS IN WOMEN'S TENNIS

LONDON, 1 JULY

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka has expressed her disinterest in shifting women's tennis to a best-of-five-sets format at Grand Slam events, citing concerns over injury risks. After her first-round victory at Wimbledon, Sabalenka stated, "Probabilly physically I'm one of the strongest ones, but I think it's too much on a woman's body. We're not ready for this amount of tennis." Women currently compete in best-of-three sets at all tournaments, while men play best-of-five at Grand Slams.

While the topic occasionally resurfaces in discussions, there's no significant movement advocating for this change. Sabalenka referenced the recent French Open final, where Carlos Alcaraz triumphed in an exhausting five-set match. "I'm not really jealous to stay there for five hours," she said. Similarly, No. 2-ranked Coco Gauff voiced her agreement, acknowledging the potential benefits of the format. —*PTI*

Alexia Putellas ready to lead Spain at Euro 2025

MADRID, 1 JULY

Star midfielder Alexia Putellas is eager to lead Spain into Euro 2025 in Switzerland, following a disappointing experience at the last tournament where an injury kept her sidelined. Putellas, who has made a strong recovery since tearing her knee ligament, declared, "I've been preparing for this moment for a long time and I want to enjoy it."

Her previous injury affected Spain's performance, ultimately resulting in their elimination by England in the quarterfinals. Now, Putellas feels she has evolved as both an athlete and a person. With another stellar season under her belt and Barcelona claiming the domestic treble, she's again a contender for the world player of the year award.

Despite recognising her individual achievements, Putellas emphasised that her primary focus remains on winning Euro 2025. Spain, fresh from their historic World Cup victory in 2023 and a Nations League title in 2024, aims to capture their first European title. The team's opening match is against Portugal on Thursday, facing Belgium and Italy in Group B. "We have a lot of faith in our team," she stated, indicating optimism for the tournament ahead. —*PTI*

Despite recognising her individual achievements, Alexia Putellas emphasised that her primary focus remains on winning Euro 2025 PHOTO: PTI

Mbappe set for potential Club World Cup debut

MIAMI GARDENS, 1 JULY

- Mbappé missed Madrid's three group-stage matches after being hospitalised with a gastrointestinal illness. The Spanish side went unbeaten, finishing 2-0-1 without him

Real Madrid star Kylian Mbappé may make his Club World Cup debut in Tuesday's round of 16 clash against Juventus, manager Xabi Alonso confirmed. "I don't know how much, but a big possibility," Alonso said on Monday at Hard Rock Stadium.

Mbappé missed Madrid's three group-stage matches after being hospitalised with a gastrointestinal illness. The Spanish side went unbeaten, finishing 2-0-1 without him.

His return would inject star power into the tournament, especially following the early exit of Lionel Messi and Inter Miami, who were eliminated by Mbappé's former club, Paris Saint-Germain, in the first knockout round.

Madrid also welcome back captain Dani Carvajal and defender Éder Militão. Carvajal, sidelined since tearing his ACL last autumn, could feature for the first time in months.

"I could be on the bench at the disposal of the manager, so I'm very happy about that," he said from the club's training base in Palm Beach Gardens. —*PTI*

EYES TOP 5 SPOTS

Khelo Bharat Niti to boost India's ranking

NEW DELHI, 1 JULY

The Indian government has unveiled the Khelo Bharat Niti, a strategic roadmap aimed at propelling India into the top five sporting nations globally by 2047. The cabinet approved the policy on Tuesday, which seeks to enhance coaching, athlete support, and administrative frameworks in anticipation of the 2036 Olympics.

Replacing the 2001 National Sports Policy, the Khelo Bharat Niti 2025 is designed as a guiding document for improving the country's sporting ecosystem. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasised the policy's focus on grassroots sports, particularly in rural areas. "It's a well-thought-through policy addressing all matters related to sports, including governance," he stated.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasised the policy's focus on grassroots sports, particularly in rural areas PHOTO: PTI

As part of the initiative, the new policy encourages partnerships with the private sector, aiming to boost funding and support for individual Olympic sports. Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya remarked on the importance of this transformative step in reshaping India's sporting landscape, which includes plans to promote a vibrant league culture across various sports disciplines.

The Khelo Bharat Niti also seeks alignment with the National Education Policy by integrating sports into school curriculums and equipping educators with specialised training. The policy is inclusive, aiming to increase participation among underrepresented groups, including women, the LGBTQ+ community, and economically disadvantaged sections.

With an emphasis on linking sports with tourism and economic development, the government aims to leverage large-scale sporting events, like the IPL, to enhance India's global sports standing. The document was developed after extensive consultations with stakeholders from various sectors, marking a significant shift in India's approach to sports. —*PTI*